

Restoring a Scratched, Chipped or Cracked Frame

A "fix it yourself" project can be a great experience, but good judgment should be used when evaluating what is best for the damaged object.

**By DiAnna Tindell
Master Restoration Specialist**

At a recent framer's workshop, questions were raised regarding common damage to frames, such as minor scratches, cracks, chips and missing small parts. What might be involved to accomplish some simple "fix it yourself" restores? What level of restore can be anticipated and still be cost-effective?

It's hard to resist the temptation of a "fix it yourself" project. The goal might be to avoid the high cost charged by a professional restoration specialist and the possible delay waiting for its completion. Maybe there is inventory that includes some minor damage that just needs a little help. At first glance, you may decide the damage is relatively simple and by doing it yourself you can save time and money.

Because there's such a broad array of frame types, it would be best to place them into categories that range from "easy" to "very difficult" to restore. For each category I've included descriptions of some frame types and suggestions on how to proceed:

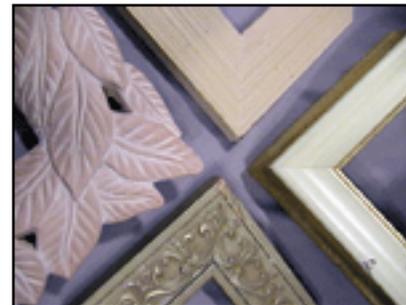
Category #1 - Easy - Frame restore can include matte, dull or bisque finishes, with lighter pastel colorations of just one or two layers. The surface of these type frames would be more forgiving to slight imperfections and demand less challenge to match coloring, etc. Restore attempts should yield great results.



Category #2 - Moderately Easy - Can include textured surfaces or raised/sculpted simple detail designs to include dull to semi-gloss finish. With a busy surface, it may distract from a restored area's flaws. The raised or textured details can allow shadow and irregularity that may aid in hiding average restore attempts if needed. The overall results should be satisfactory.



Category #3 - Some Problems - Can include the higher gloss and/or deeper, darker coloration frame types. When a surface includes multiple layers of richer, deeper and/or darker glossy colors, it may require more processing time, cost and patience. The challenge to accomplish an acceptable restore will involve more talent to match several applications of various mediums, with coloration coatings and final gloss.



Category #4 - More Problematic - Can include the golds, silvers, bronzes, other metallics and varied iridescent pearlized luster frame types. These will require more supply cost with a broader range of materials for the different surface requirements. These frame types can also require steps needed in categories #1 thru #3 before further processing of the special surface needs of #4. The overall results to obtain an acceptable restore will require more care, time, cost and attention to detail.



Category #5 - Very Difficult - Can include the more reflective "mirrored" metallics and the perfectly smooth satin or high sheen broader surface frame types. To reproduce these type characteristics, the restore demands perfection and can include higher cost products. This normally requires professional knowledge and experience. It is very difficult to obtain an invisible restore.



Obviously more time and cost may be required for each new category of restore. Additionally, new learning curves require time to overcome the different challenges. It isn't easy to work on projects without a workspace area, tools, equipment, adequate lighting and ventilation. This additional requirement should be factored into the overall total time and cost.

Training in some areas of restoration might also be helpful. You don't always need artistic ability to effect a minor restore. There are some excellent how-to guides and easy restoration kits available to complete many minor damaged items to acceptable levels. It is best to use all materials in the same manufacturer recommended compatible product line. Mixing different manufacturer types may result in adverse reactions.

Training programs can vary from correspondence courses, short workshops, week-long programs and private customized sessions. Try to determine whether the information offered is current. You should periodically seek training to keep up with

improvements in technique and technology. Always remember, for best results a test should be completed on a small area first, or applied to a "dummy" object of like body type.

A few educational areas to research should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- 1. Cleaning - Understand different cleaning techniques to avoid damage to more fragile surfaces and body types such as chalk, ceramic, low-fired, cold paint, applied design and metallics. There are many cleaning products too harsh for delicate objects.**
- 2. Bonding - A liquid adhesive is fine for semi to hard body types, but will only soak into a porous body type leaving very little on the surface to bond. A gel adhesive should work better. If the object requires more strength, an industrial two-part epoxy and supports may be required.**
- 3. New Parts - Not all molding compounds are safe to apply over an object for duplication of a part. Some molds are too heavy or stiff and can leave a petroleum stain on objects. Other molding compounds are softer, flexible, non-staining and even clean in color to observe a better duplication of fragile items.**
- 4. Fillers/Casting Compounds - There are many compounds. Choose among a liquid, light curing, wet/dry mix, thermal and two-part epoxy. The wax type fills can be best for minor surface damage (such as scratches). To fill chips there are easy-to-apply color fills including metallics and clears. A liquid can be used for injecting a crack. Most of the fillers can be used to pour a cast into a mold to create a new part. The key is to select the product that best matches the "body type" of the object to maintain the same texture, weight, durability, translucency, balance and resonant ring.**
- 5. Final Details - Most objects will require some kind of additional painting (airbrushing is helpful), detail design, applied beading, raised relief, faux finish, unusual attachments (i.e. rhinestones, tapestry, etc.), metallics, top glazes of dull, semi, gloss and much more. This is a very broad area and can make a huge difference in the final appearance of any restore. To simply repair an area does not always include the much needed age cracks, distressed appearance, or other unique final finish.**

A "fix it yourself" project can be a great experience, but good judgment should be used to evaluate what is best for the damaged object. Even though the damage appears minor -- such as a few scratches, chips or small missing parts -- the overall

processing may be too big a challenge. If the frame is fragile, very sentimental, a hazard risk, rare and/or valuable, it would be advisable to acquire the services of a highly skilled restoration specialist.

DiAnna Tindell is a master restoration specialist and the founder of Tindell's Restoration Schools in Nashville, TN. Visit her website at www.TindellsRestorationSchools.com Oil Painting and Frame Workshops are scheduled. Send mail to P.O. Box 292633, Nashville, TN 37229-2633.

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