



**Tombstone**  
**Gun Grips**

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## **Finishing Black Grips**

Black grips (or dark grey) may be smooth or checkered. Smooth grips can be buffed and polished to a beautiful surface finish using various grades of abrasive compound on buffing wheels, just as metal can be polished to a high shine. Checkered or carved grips, however, cannot be finished this way. Either kind of grip can be given a deeper black finish by using ordinary black shoe polish (shoe wax, which comes in a flat can).

The wax is applied by tapping the bristles of an old toothbrush against the wax surface, to pick up a small amount of wax, and then briskly striking the grip with a glancing firm stroke to drive the wax into small pores in the surface of the grip. Just brushing the wax on will not make it permanent. A firm, glancing blow with the tips of the bristles will drive the color into the surface. Then, use a small stiff hair brush, such as a child's brush, or a wide denture brush, to buff the surface. Use a rapid, glancing stroke similar to that used to polish shoes. This removes surplus wax, and heats the remaining wax so that it penetrates deeper into the grip pores and fissures, which helps prevent the color from rubbing off on your hands.

The process should take about 1-2 minutes for application of the wax, and 1-2 minutes to buff it to a hard finish. When you sand and file the edges or back of the grip, it causes small chips or curls of the material which look lighter than the solid mass of the grip. By vigorous brushing, the microscopic chips are burnished flat or knocked off, leaving a smoother surface, and the wax is both driven into the crevices left by filing and sanding, and trapped under the burnished-over edges of these tiny crevices.

Do not apply too much wax, as it simply rubs off when you handle the grips. Apply a small amount energetically. You can see the change in color and gloss as you continue to brush in all directions across the grip, which makes sure that no matter what orientation of small furrows are in the surface, you will buff them and fill them with hardened wax.

Since grips generally need light sanding, at minimum, to fit properly on the gun, you will remove any surface finish that was applied previously. But this technique allows you to replace it and greatly improve the appearance. Generally, a black pearl grip does not need this treatment. But you can get a deeper color on most pearl grips by buffing and polishing the surface with a muslin wheel and fine polishing compound.

If you paint the back of pearl grips with black model airplane "dope", which is a high grade enamel, it provides a backdrop for the translucent areas of the pearl grip that may bring out deeper hues on blue, violet, black, or other dark color grips. White, pink, and other light color pearl grips may benefit instead from a white gloss enamel layer on the flat back of the grip.