

Basic Guide to Gilding

This basic method uses either oil or water based adhesive size and can be used to apply gold, silver or metal leaf to most internal and external surfaces. Water based size is not suitable for external gilding. Gilding with water-based adhesive

should not be confused with traditional "water gilding" methods. The water gilding system produces a burnishable gilded surface and is a completely different process usually undertaken by experienced gilders.

1- Prepare And Prime The Surface

Lightly sand the surface to be gilded, if necessary and apply a suitable primer. It is important that the surface to be gilded is non porous otherwise the gilding "size" will soak into the substrate and the gold, silver leaf or metal leaf will not adhere. If the surface is metal, make sure there is no grease or dirt and the surface is completely clean.

The colour paint or clay used to prime the surface will determine the overall appearance of the finished product as it acts as an undertone to the gold or silver leaf. For example, a red colour beneath gold will give a warm rich finish and likewise, a grey or blue tone beneath silver will give a cooler tone to the silver finish.



2 - Apply Adhesive Size



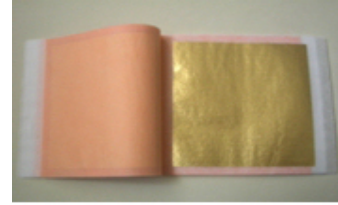
"Size" is the name given in the trade to the adhesive used to fix the leaf to the surface. It is available as water based size or oil-based size. Water based size should not be used outdoors. The water based size reaches tack within about 20 minutes and is ready to receive the gold. The "open" time is at least 36 hours and often longer. The oil-based sizes are available in a variety of drying times from 1.5 hr to 24 hr and they have different "open" times. It is best to refer to our website, www.goldleafsupplies.co.uk, to reference the open and drying times of the various sizes available.



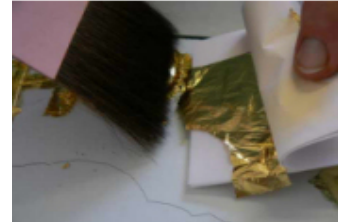
Apply the chosen size to the substrate with a good size brush in thin, even coats. The size will dry to a "tack" which will feel like the back of a piece of sellotape. It is then ready to receive the leaf. It is important not to lay the leaf when the size is still wet.

3 - Apply The Leaf

If you are using Transfer leaf, take a sheet out of the booklet, place it face down onto the sized area and gently rub over the back of the backing paper to release the gold onto the surface. As you continue gilding, overlap the leaf by about 2mm (This will avoid any gaps in between the leaves which may be fiddly to fill in later)



If you are using loose leaf, gently lift the leaf from the booklet using a gilders tip or other soft brush and using a gilders mop, tamp the leaf into the intricate areas of the moulding.



4 - Finishing

After all the leaf is laid, leave the item for a few hours to allow the size to dry out beneath the leaf and using a soft mop brush away all the loose skewings (odd bits of leaf that are attached on the overlaps). Brush over the whole surface lightly to create a soft burnish on the leaf.

If there are any gaps in the leaf, these can be touched up using the skewings.

5 - Protection



Genuine gold leaf 22ct and above does not need to be sealed, as it will not oxidise. Gold of this high carat looks far better if it can be left without a varnish. Anything lower than this carat can oxidise, as will most of the metal leaf alloys. Aluminium, Palladium and Platinum are non-tarnishing. However, if the gold 22ct and above is in heavy traffic areas or is likely to get scratched or finger marked then it will need protection. We have a range of varnishes and lacquers available for this purpose.

Many gilded items require an antiqued finish. This can be added to the newly gilded item by using a variety of antiquing methods.

6 - Finished Result

With a little time and effort you can learn to achieve quality gilded finishes and transform an every day object into a beautiful object d'art. If you wish to take the Art of Gilding even further then we recommend you read "Practical Gilding" by Peter and Ann Mac Taggart – available in our online shop.

