

How to Antique a Commercial Mirror

by AngelGilding.com

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When you “antique” or distress an existing commercial mirror, you do not have to silver the glass but you do have to remove the backing paint. Not all backing paints are the same; some are more difficult to remove than others. The silver on a commercial mirror does not react to antiquing chemicals in the same way that the silver on a new, freshly made mirror does.

We have a number of chemicals and application techniques that will remove or thin the silver on a commercial mirror. If you would like to use more than one technique on a single mirror, follow these rules.

- Use only one chemical- one technique – at a time and work in layers.
- Examine the front of the mirror after each technique. What you see on the silver side of the mirror is NOT what you will see from the front of the mirror.
- Use the most aggressive technique first (for example Dissolved PFC Crystals) and then refine the result with a less aggressive technique (for example Pumice).

DO NOT mix these chemicals together. At the worst you will create a potentially dangerous unidentifiable mix. At best you will remove all of the silver and end up with clear glass. AngelGilding.com is not responsible for anything that might happen if you disregard this notice.

We *strongly* suggest that you buy several sample pieces (6” x 6”) from a single manufacturer and practice removing the paint and distressing the silver before you get to work on your masterpiece. The skills you gain by practicing will be reflected in the beauty of your finished work.

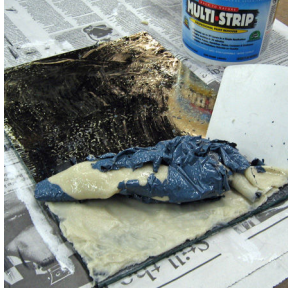
Note: Some commercial mirrors are made with aluminum instead of silver. The best way to tell the difference is to remove a little of the paint and apply one of our removers. Silver Remover only dissolves silver and Aluminum Remover only dissolves aluminum. For more information, see [How To Antique an Aluminum Mirror](#).

Part 1: Remove the Backing Paint



Step 1 – Apply Multi-Strip Paint Remover

1. Place the mirror, painted side up, on several sheets of newspaper.
2. Use our paint scraper or an old paint brush to apply a thick layer of remover – you should not be able to see the paint.
3. Allow 8 to 10 hours for the Multi-Strip to work.



Step 2 – Peel Off the Softened Paint

1. Use the paint scraper to gently push the Multi-Strip back from one corner of the mirror.
2. If the paint lifts off easily, gently push it off the rest of the mirror.
3. If you can **not** push it off easily, pat down the test area and allow more time for the stripper to work.

Note: The time it takes for the paint to lift away from the mirror will vary depending on the manufacturer and on the temperature of your work room. Give the stripper the time it needs to soften and lift the paint. Usually the paint and remover come off together in a single layer.



Step 3 – Wash Off the Residue

1. Use cotton balls and distilled water to gently clean the exposed mirror. Any residue remaining on the mirror will interfere with the action of our antiquing chemicals.
2. Multi-Strip is non-toxic and bio-degradable. You can safely throw the used Multi-Strip and newspaper into your household trash.

About Copper-Backed Silver Mirrors:

Some mirror manufacturers add a protective layer of copper over their silver and some do not. This copper layer may look gold, pink or red. Copper Remover will remove the copper – if it is there – or the gold colored silver oxides if the silver is not backed with copper. If the Copper Remover on your cotton ball turns blue when you wipe the exposed mirror, the silver has a copper backing. If it does not turn blue, it does not have copper on it. Some of our chemicals give a different result when they are applied to copper-covered silver. See the notes below for details.



Step 4 – Remove the Copper Backing (Optional)

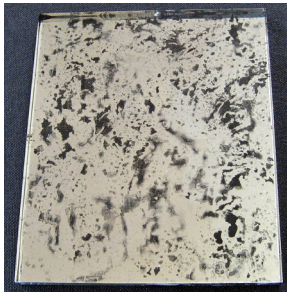
1. First read our [Directions for Using Copper Remover](#).
2. Drip Copper Remover onto a cotton ball and wipe off the copper.
3. Dry the exposed silver with a dry cotton ball as you go.
4. Rinse or wash the exposed silver with distilled water to remove all traces of Copper Remover.

Part 2: Antique the Mirror

Techniques for All Mirrors:

These photos show what each technique looks like on a finished, painted mirror. They do not show the silver side of the mirror. What you see on the back of the mirror when you apply the chemical is **not** what you will see when you turn the mirror over.

Diluted Galena Remover



1. Mix 5 ml Galena Remover with 10 ml tap water.
2. Place the mirror on a brightly colored surface so that you can see how much silver is being removed.
3. Dip a cotton ball in the diluted Remover mix and dab it on the mirror.

Add more Galena Remover if the mix does not seem to be removing the mirror.

Note: Galena Remover often leaves a faint purple-brown coating on the mirror. You can remove this coating by rinsing the mirror with distilled water or you can let it dry and paint over it for an additional antiquing effect.

Pumice



1. Make a paste of pumice and water.
2. Dip a cotton ball in the paste and buff the mirror in a random pattern to thin or remove the silver.
3. Check your results frequently to be sure you are not removing too much silver.

BASO Powder



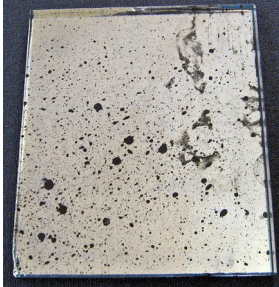
1. Sprinkle the dry surface with BASO Powder.
2. Mist the powder with distilled water.
3. Let the misted powder sit on the mirror for 20 minutes.
4. Rinse the mirror well with distilled water.

A light misting creates distinct dots. Heavy misting gives a more mottled effect.

BASO Powder applied to a copper-backed mirror creates a darker more mottled effect than it does on a pure silver mirror.

Techniques for Silver Without a Copper Backing

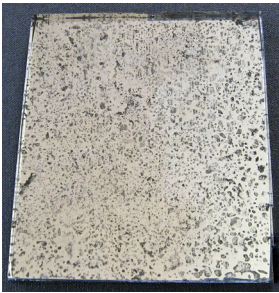
Silver Remover – Dilute



1. Mix equal quantities of Silver Remover Parts A and B.
2. Dip a clean toothbrush in the mix and shake to remove the excess.
3. Hold the toothbrush – bristles facing up – over the mirror and pull your finger back over them to spatter the Silver Remover onto the silver.

This creates actual holes in the silver rather than thinning it. Use sparingly.

BASO Powder



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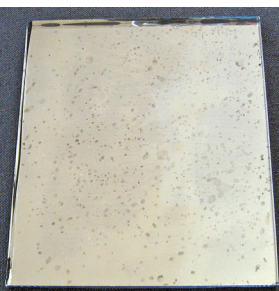
PFC Crystals – Dissolved



1. Dissolve ½ teaspoon (2 grams) PFC Crystals in 1 fluid ounce (30 ml) of distilled water.
2. Pour the mix on the silver.
3. Leave for 30 minutes and then rinse well.

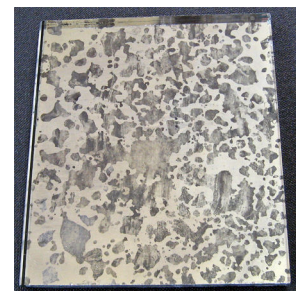
The longer you leave it the heavier the effect. You can use an old toothbrush for a spattered effect (see Silver Remover).

PFC Crystals – Dry



5 minutes

1. Sprinkle dry PFC Crystals on a dry surface.
2. Mist with distilled water.
3. Leave on the surface for 5 minutes for a light texture or 20 minutes for a heavy texture.



20 minutes

SNC Crystals – Dissolved



1. Mix ¼ teaspoon (1 gram) of SNC Crystals in 1 fluid ounce (30 ml) distilled water.
2. Pour on the silver – do not rock or move the glass as it dries.
3. Allow the glass to dry overnight.
4. Do not rinse. Paint directly over the dried crystals.

This technique creates areas of non-reflective whitish silver on the mirror that are very lovely and very difficult to photograph.

When you use this technique, the backing paint does not adhere well to the silver. **Do not** use this technique if you will be using mastic to mount the mirror.

Part 3: Finishing Up

Step 1 – Re-Paint the Mirror



1. Use a paint designed for silver mirrors.
2. Use a roller, spray or brush to paint the back of your mirror with mirror backing paint or clear lacquer depending on how you plan to display it.
3. Allow the backing to dry completely before moving the glass.
4. Clean the mirror face with a commercial glass cleaner.

Using an untested paint could cause your mirror to decay unexpectedly as the silver coating is now very thin.



Step 2 – Stand Back and Admire Your Handiwork

Antiquing is an organic process. Each mirror is unique. The more you practice, the more techniques you will discover and the more you will be able to control your results.

It is the organic and sometimes unexpected results that make antique silver mirrors so wonderful.

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