BLACKENING BRASS TUBES FOR PENS

(the quick method)

There are a number of ways to blacken those shiny brass tubes used in plastic-type pen making - spray painting, powder coating, and the likes, but having done most of the methods over the years, I find using a metal oxidizing chemical (used often by jewelry makers) is a quick, fool-proof method, that does the job simply and easily.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

1. Paper towels
2. A flexible sanding pad or sheet of sandpaper (fairly rough grit)
3. An awl or pen-tube insertion tool, or simply a dowel rod, sanded down to a taper that will fit inside the brass tube.
4. A container of "BLACKIT" or similar oxidizing product (for brass) I have found the best price to be from Ablehobby.com (http://tinyurl.com/7vpyk) There are numerous places where this type solution can be found on Google ("BLACKIT"), but this one is what I use and is the best price I have found.
5. Brass tubes, of course.

STEP 1

Take your tube and "drive" it onto your tapered tool. I just fit it on and "tap" it once to a hard surface until it will hold itself onto the taper.

I then use my flexible sanding pad (or sandpaper) and in my left hand, form a "U" channel.

Then basically, "screw" the tube into the sanding surface - i.e. Push and turn until the full length has been slightly roughened- this is just to get any fingerprints, oils or whatever off the outside surface - nothing critical here. This is also a simple technique to roughing your tubes before glueing them into your blanks. Personally, I never roughen my tubes before glueing - I use 2-part epoxy.

STEP 2

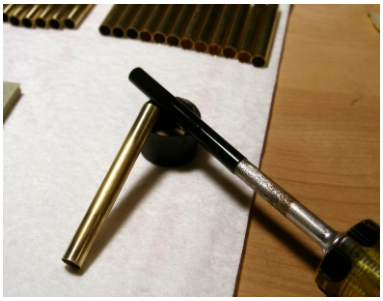
This is just a comparison shot of the "before and after" of your sanding or cleaning process. Don't waste a lot of time on this - it shouldn't take more than 10 seconds.

STEP 3

Now take your cleaned tube and dunk it into the bottle of oxidizer. The reason I use an awl is that it rests nicely on the bottle neck; however, using a piece of dowel rod works just as well - just let it rest on the bottom of the container (make it long enough to act as a retrieval "handle" sticking out of the bottle.

Leave it into the solution for about 2 minutes - lift it up and see if it's black enough. Sometimes it comes out a very dark brown. This is just as good - main point is that it isn't brass colored anymore. You can replace it into the solution again, if you want it totally black.

When It comes out of the solution, I generally just wipe the excess off with a paper towel - and lay it aside and go on to the next one. As I recall however, the directions suggest that you wash it down with water - then dry off and set aside, as you do others.



Finally, here is how it looks, compared to the original tube color. Want a black tube that won't show through your pen blanks? You got it! Since I don't use anything but 2-part epox when glueing in tubes, I don't know whether any of the other glues will have any effect on the surface, but my feeling is that they won't - this is a chemical process that literally etches or acts on the surface of the metal being treated. I can only say that it's always been a very successful solution for me.

NOTICE TO YOU SENSITIVE "BREATHERS" OUT THERE

"VAPORS CAN BE HARMFUL"- "DO NOT DRINK"- "POISON"- "WORK, USING **ADEQUATE VENTILATION"**

. . . CONTAINS DENATURED ALCOHOL, SELENOUS ACID AND DILUTE COPPER CHLORIDE/COPPER CARBONATE

I GENERALLY USE THIS OUTSIDE OR IN THE GARAGE, WITH A FAN BLOWING ACROSS MY WORK AREA AND HAVE NEVER SUFFERED ANY ILL EFFECTS. OH, AND IT DOESN'T SIT THERE EMITTING CLOUDS OF TOXIC SMOKE. JUST USE GOOD JUDGEMENT AND HAVE YOURSELF SOME REALLY DARK BRASS TUBES. .....Jay pickens 6/25/05