

Use the sand paper to smooth away nicks, scratches or rough spots in the wood (as they will be more visible once you stain). Wipe off all the sawdust.

Use the 2" foam brush to apply the stain according to the directions on the jar. Be sure to brush the stain on in the same direction as the wood grain. Set the piece aside and let it dry for at least 2 hours before you start applying your paper (if you start gluing too soon the stain may bleed out of the wood and onto your paper).

Step 3: Crop

While you wait for the wood stain to dry, cut out the images that you want to apply to the suitcase. The more of the background you cut away, the more of the stained surface of the suitcase will be visible.

Step 4: Decoupage

Decide where you want to place the images before you start gluing. Try not to cover up all the holes for the hinges and clasps.

Use the 1" foam brush to apply a liberal coat of ModPodge or Royal Coat to the back of an image and wait about 30 seconds before you apply it to the suitcase (this is to allow the moisture from the glue to soak into the paper so that it lays flat once applied). For pieces larger than 3" applying a layer of glue to the surface of the suitcase as well as to the back of the paper will ensure that it sticks well and lays flat.

Apply all the images you like and then set the suitcase aside to allow the glue you just applied to dry before you proceed (10-20 min.) - your carefully applied images will warp and curl up off of the suitcase if you top coat them before the underlying glue has dried!

Wash the glue out of the foam brush with hot water and set it aside to dry too.

Step 5: Top Coat and Varnish

Use the 1" foam brush to apply a liberal top coat of Mod Podge or Royal Coat over all of your images (this ensures that all the edges are glued down well and helps create a seamless look to your collage). Take care to not get glue on the inside edges of the lid or body of the suitcase – the surfaces will stick together when you reassemble the suitcase and you will have glued the lid shut!

Let this layer dry completely (10-20 min.) – you'll know it's dry when all of the glue has turned clear and the surface feels room temperature (if it feels cool, the glue isn't completely dry yet).

Wash the brush again; you're going to need it one more time.

When the top coat of glue has dried, use the foam brush to apply a liberal coat of Satin Varnish over the whole piece (it's okay to coat the inside of the suitcase too). Let this dry (10-20 min?again).

You're done with the foam brush now, so toss it out if it's looking a little gnarly.

Step 6: Ribbon

The ribbon is going to simulate straps that go around the suitcase, but you will actually be applying them seperately to the lid and body of the piece, the hinges and clasps will disguise the ends of the ribbon.

Measure a length of ribbon that starts at the location of a hinge (look for the screw holes) and wraps around the lid to the location of a clasp, cut two pieces this length. Repeat this for the ribbon that goes around the body of the suitcase.

Apply a strip of Terrifically Tacky Tape down the back side of a piece of ribbon and adhere it to the box in the same way you measured the ribbon: from hinge to clasp. Take care that you lay it down straight the first time – you will not be able to pull up the ribbon and reposition it without tearing up your collage.

Step 7: Reassemble

Replace all the hardware, hinges first (this will make replacing the clasps easier), then handle and corners (just tap the brads back in place with the hammer).

Done - now sit back and admire your handywork!