

## **Furniture Use and Care**

Careless and uninformed treatment of furniture is the second major cause of preventable damage. Damage to furniture is telltale: it is either caused by poor construction (over which the caretaker has no control) or it is the result of improper use or care. You don't have to be a specialist or scholar to treat furniture properly, all it takes is a basic understanding of the nature of wooden objects and of what furniture is and is meant to do, combine with common sense.

Here are some common-sense pointers:

- Protect surfaces from fire and excessive heat
- Sit only on structures designed for that purpose
- Be careful about what you place on a piece of furniture

Hot items, such as irons, coffee mugs, and steaming tureens can literally melt a finish away. Water from spills and condensation from vases and cold drink glasses can damage and deface coatings through "blooming," an effect that makes transparent coatings white or milky. Damage is even worse when the liquid itself stains the surface, such as when ink or coffee or tea is spilled, or if the coating is penetrated and the staining liquid enters the wood itself.

Organic solvents, such as fingernail polish and remover, perfumes, and alcoholic drinks can behave as paint and varnish removers on many kinds of coatings.

These problems are simple to address. Using coasters, oversized ashtrays, and writing pads can virtually eliminate the potential for damage.