



How to achieve a flawless CA glue finish: A step-by-step guide for pen turners

A cyanoacrylate (CA) glue finish creates a tough, crystal-clear coating that protects your pen while bringing out the depth and figure of the wood. This guide follows the process demonstrated in our GluBoost finishing video – but you can also use other CA glues and accelerators to achieve similar results.

Products used:

- GluBoost Ultra Thin CA (Green) – best for sealing end grain, penetrating tiny cracks, first coats of a CA finish
- GluBoost Thin CA (Orange) – best for general filling, building the finish, filling small voids
- GluBoost Original/Medium CA (Blue) – best for filling larger voids, levelling low spots, final build coat
- GluBoost Glue Dry Accelerator
- Abranet abrasives (120–600 grit)
- Micro Mesh abrasives (1,500–12,000 grit)
- Novus 2 Plastic Polish

Step 1 – Prepare the blank

After the brass tube has been glued in and the ends have been trimmed:

- Apply a small amount of Ultra Thin CA to each end of the blank.
- Allow it to wick into the wood around the brass tube.
- Spray lightly with Glue Dry Accelerator.

This helps strengthen the wood around the tube, seal tiny gaps, reduce moisture penetration and help prevent future cracking.

Step 2 – Stabilize any voids and fill them (if no voids, move to the next step).

If your blank contains cracks, bark inclusions or areas for inlay, apply a drop of Ultra Thin CA. Allow it to soak into the fibres and cure with accelerator. The Ultra Thin formula penetrates deeply and reinforces weak areas before filling begins.

For decorative inlays such as crushed opal:

1. Pack the void with the inlay material.
2. Apply Ultra Thin CA to lock the first layer in place.
3. Build additional layers using Thin CA.
4. Finish larger or deeper cavities with Medium CA.

Using different viscosities allows the glue to penetrate where needed while also filling larger spaces.

Step 3 – Turn and sand

Once the glue has cured:

- Remove any high spots with light cuts.
- Sand through 120–600 grit with Abranet by Mirka.



Spend extra time with the first grit. Its job is to level the surface completely before progressing through finer abrasives.

Step 5 – Check for pinholes

Blow sanding dust out of the blank with compressed air. Dust often hides tiny pinholes that become visible once the surface is clean. Fill any remaining imperfections before continuing.

- Small holes → Thin CA
- Larger holes → Medium CA

Step 6 – Apply the CA finish

Base coats: Apply four coats of Ultra Thin CA. These coats penetrate the wood and seal the surface.

Build coats: Apply four coats of Thin CA. These create the protective finish.

Final levelling coat (optional): A single coat of Medium CA can help fill any remaining low spots and produce an exceptionally flat finish.

Step 7 – Polish

Allow the finish to cure. Dry sand with Micro Mesh through to 12,000 grit. The first Micro-Mesh grit (1500) should leave the entire blank with an even, dull appearance. Once the surface is uniformly dull, work through the remaining grits to restore a deep gloss. You can also use the Zona paper wet/dry polishing sheets instead of Micro Mesh.

The video finishes with Novus 2 Plastic Polish for added shine.

Workshop tips

- ✓ Use several thin coats rather than one heavy coat.
- ✓ Don't rush the sanding stage.
- ✓ Blow sanding dust from voids before deciding they're filled.
- ✓ Different glue viscosities solve different problems—use each where it performs best.
- ✓ A light spray of Glue Dry Accelerator is all that's needed.

Why use the complete GluBoost system?

There are several advantages over using regular CA glue and accelerators:

- Three viscosities for different applications
- Ultra Thin penetrates deeply for stabilization
- Medium fills larger voids quickly
- Flexible CA helps reduce cracking or flaking as wood naturally moves
- Non-blushing Glue Dry Accelerator cures quickly without leaving the white haze often seen with conventional accelerators, even when used on larger glue applications.