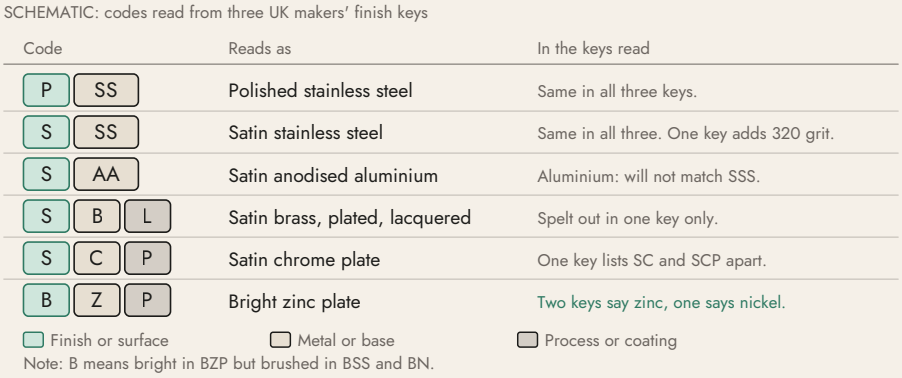
Ironmongery *finish codes* decoded

Hardware finish codes are a maker's shorthand, not a standard. Write the finish in words, add the code and the key it came from, and let an approved sample govern.

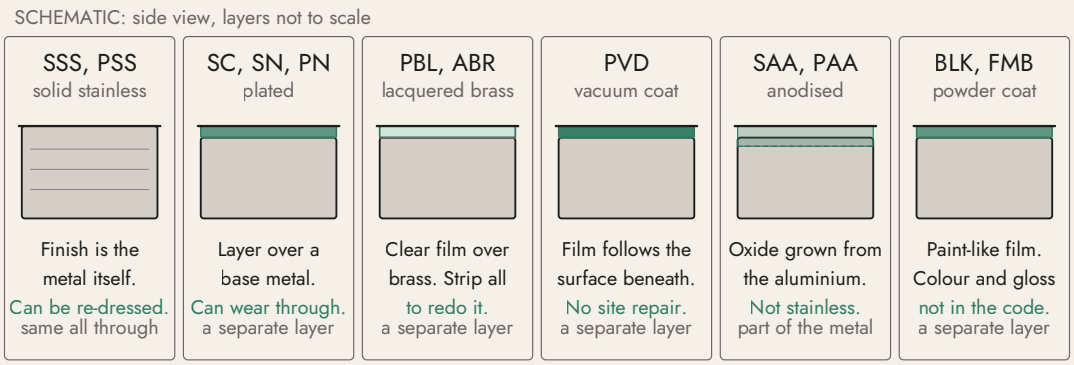
AT A GLANCE

Code	Read as	What it usually is	Where makers differ
SSS	Satin stainless steel	Solid stainless, satin finished.	Same in all keys read. One key adds a grit (320); brushed (BSS) is separate.
PSS	Polished stainless steel	Solid stainless, polished bright.	Same in all keys read. Shows marks readily.
SAA, PAA	Satin or polished anodised aluminium	Aluminium with an anodic oxide layer.	Not stainless: do not expect SAA to match SSS.
PB, SB	Polished brass, satin brass	Brass colour. Base and lacquer not stated.	Same in two keys. A third writes PBL and SBL, "electroplate, lacquered".
SC, SCP, PC, PCP	Satin or polished chrome	Chromium plate over a base metal.	One key lists SC and SCP apart, and PC and PCP.
SN, SNP, BN, PN, NP	Nickel finishes	Nickel plate, or a brushed look.	Seven spellings in three keys. Ask which finish and process.
BZP, ZP, BZ, GALV	Zinc finishes	Protective, usually on hidden parts such as hinges.	BZP is zinc in two keys and bright nickel in a third.
AB, ANB, ABR, ORB, OBZ	Antique brass; oil rubbed, old bronze	Patinated, usually sealed.	Where explained, old bronze is brass plate, patinated and lacquered. Sample.
PVD	PVD, then a colour	A vacuum-applied hard coating.	Names a process, not a colour or gloss.
BLK, FMB, NST	Black; flat matt black; polyester powder	Painted or powder coated.	No colour reference or gloss: add both.

Codes as printed in three UK makers' finish keys read on 5 November 2026. They are shorthand, not a standard: confirm each against the key for the product you are buying.



Six codes taken apart letter by letter, as given in the three keys we read. Original schematic by Make Bespoke Studio.



Six constructions behind hardware finishes. Original schematic by Make Bespoke Studio; layers not to scale.

SPECIFICATION WORDING

HARDWARE SCHEDULE: FINISH LINE

Finish: [satin stainless steel], solid, grade [EN 1.4401 (316)], grain [along the handle]. Maker's code [SSS] per the [supplier] finish key, edition [date], key attached. Approved sample [ref. S-014] governs where code and sample disagree. Another maker's equivalent code is not accepted without written approval and a physical sample. All visible metal on door sets [D01 to D12] to match sample board [ref. __].

PLATED OR LACQUERED FINISH

Finish: [satin chrome], chromium plated over [nickel] on a [brass] base, [lacquered / not lacquered]. Plating system and minimum thickness to be stated by the supplier: [ ]. Corrosion resistance to BS EN 1670 grade [ ], edition [ ]. Lacquer system and touch-up method to be stated: [ ]. Approved sample [ref. __].

PVD FINISH

Finish: PVD [brass], [satin], on [stainless steel], base finish [2J, vertical grain]. Colour reference sample [ref. __] from the coating house, with certificate number [ ]. Items from different makers to be matched to it under project lighting at [1] m before approval. No site repair: damaged parts to be replaced.

TERMS USED

PVD (physical vapour deposition)
A very thin, hard coloured coating deposited on metal in a vacuum chamber. It reproduces the surface beneath it and cannot be repaired on site.

Lacquer (on metal)
A clear film over brass, bronze or copper that slows tarnishing. It can wear where hands land and is hard to remove and renew.

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- DHF 1032, Metal finishes: trades descriptions for door and window hardware: 2008/09; text not read.
- BS EN 1670:2007, Building hardware: corrosion resistance: scope from a catalogue entry; text not read.
- ANSI/BHMA A156.18, Materials and Finishes (BHMA): from a 2020 certificate listing; text not read.
- Euro Inox, Colouring Stainless Steel, Vol. 16 (2011)
- BSSA SSAS 7.20, Care and Maintenance of Stainless Steel (2001)
- CCI Notes 9/3, Brass and Copper (2007): museum-object guidance.
- Three UK ironmongery makers' finish keys; a US hardware maker's care sheet: read 5 Nov 2026; named in the working notes.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/ironmongery-finish-codes. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.