

EASY STEPS TO *sharpening*



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taking the mystery out of sharpening



Just like any other skill or technique in wood carving, sharpening is simply a matter of consistently using one process and practice. There is no magic, no mystery, and no secret steps - it's just practice, practice, and more practiced.

We will look at what supplies you need for your sharpening kit, the basic process to sharpening double-edged blades as bench knives, and single-edged blades as gouges and chisel, and how to care for your sharpening stones.

You will see the up-close photos from a sharpening session and learn the visual and physical clues you need to create a pristine, sharp, bright cutting edge.

safety

A dull-edged tool is a dangerous tool. A blunt or dented edge will grab into the wood, causing you to add unnecessary force to move it through the wood. A dull knife can pop uncontrollably out of the cut under this force. This is the most common cause of injuries from wood carving.

Sharpening not only makes your carving easier and cleaner, it also makes it a safer hobby.

techniques to sharpening



I truly believe that every wood carver has their own personal technique for sharpening their knives, gouges, and chisels. Some carvers prefer large clay-based Japanese stones that are soaked in water and create a thick, pasty slurry of sharpening grit. Others use only manmade diamond hones or ceramic stones.

Many carvers teach that you should only pull a blade edge across your sharpening stones while others believe that any direct of movement is useable as long as you retain a set angle for your bevel.

What I am sharing with you in this tutorial is the techniques that work consistently for me, and provide me with a sharp, crisp cutting edge. I prefer ceramic stones because they remain true and flat over many years of use. They do not require any lubrication, they can be used dry. Most importantly, they fit right into my carving kit, ready for use at any point in a carving session.

You may already have a well established method of sharpening that gives you great results every time. If so, I hope that you will still discover a few new ideas that can improve your sharpening sessions.

If you have already tried several different sharpening techniques without much success I hope that you will give this method a solid attempt - which means four to five sharpening sessions. This will give you enough time to correctly bevel and hone the edge, while you practice these simple steps.

quick notes

1. Not all blades are made of equal quality steel. Some blades will sharpen to a bright edge quickly, where others may never take an edge no matter how well you work your sharpening steps.
2. Each carving tool may need its own special treatment. I use my ceramic stones for my bench knives, but find that emery cloth wrapped around a hardwood dowel works better for sharpening my round gouges. I also change to emery cloth, folded over the edge of a small piece of 1/4" plywood for my v-gouges.
3. You do not need to work every sharpening step every time. If your knife begins to drag slightly as you are carving, you may only need to lay it on the leather strop and newspaper to refresh the edge. If your knife is leaving thin, white scratches in the wood surface you, probably need to start with the fine stone.
4. Only return to the coarse stone steps when the knife has either been abused, dented, or chipped or when you need to change the bevel angle for working on either softwood or hardwood.
5. Chose one method of sharpening and stick with it for at least five to six sessions. Each time you change methods, you change the angle, pull, and bevel of the blade. Instead of building on what you have already done, you are starting over as if you have never sharpened the tool at all.
6. Sharpening is not a magically process. Any wood carver can learn to sharpen their own tools with just a little patience, a consistent technique, and a bit of practice.

basic sharpening kit



Sharpening stones are available in a range of natural and manmade materials. My favorites are small ceramic stones as they do not belly out from use and are small enough to keep directly in my carving kit. Ceramic stones do not require lubrication, but you can, if you choose, use water or oil on the surface as you work your blades.

If you do not have a set of sharpening stones yet, you can use emery cloth - extremely fine grit metal sandpaper - that is available at most hardware stores. Emery cloth has the advantage that it can be rolled around a dowel rod to fit the curve of your round gouges, or laid over the edge of a wood board for the 90-degree angle of your v-gouges.

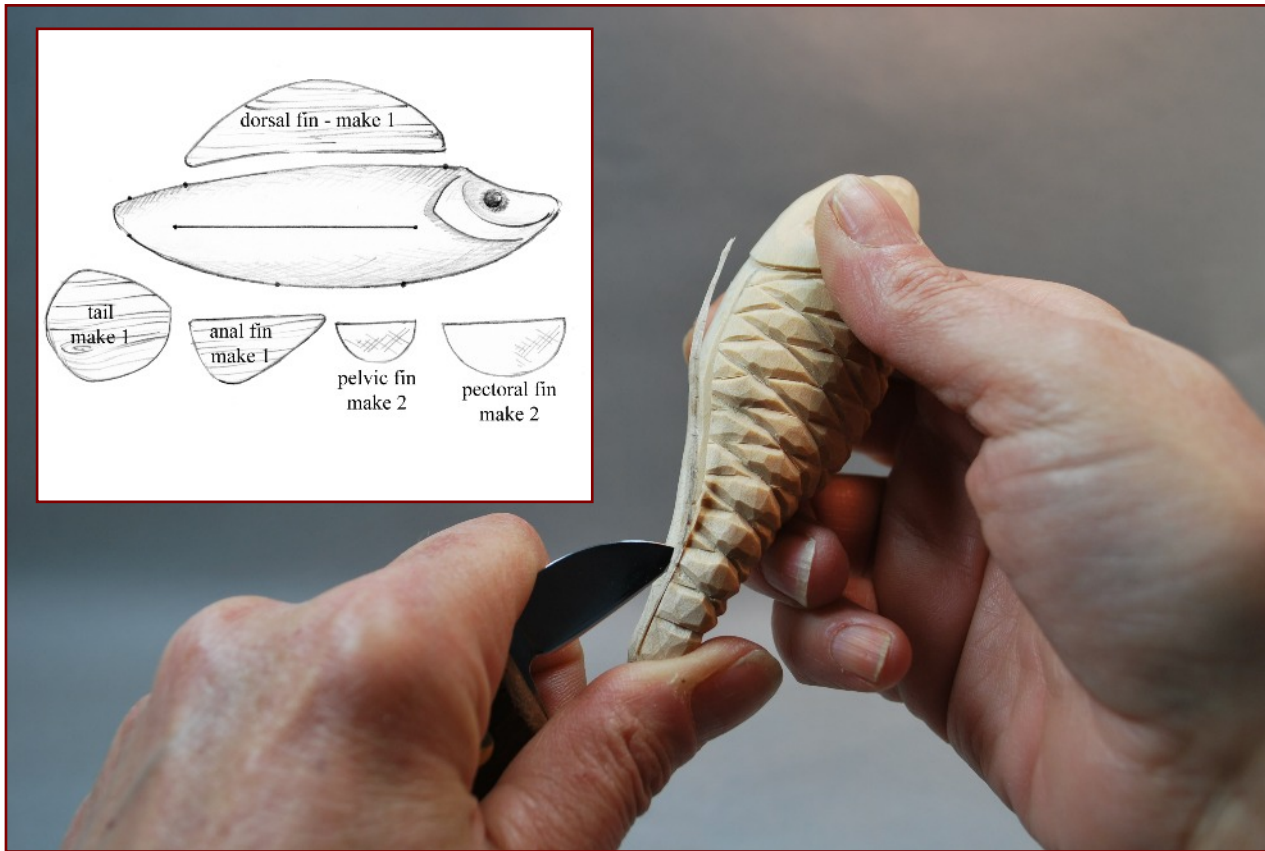
A double-sided leather strop or synthetic strop is a must for any sharpening kit. The strop, when used with honing compound, refines your tools to an extremely sharp cutting edge. During any carving session I will strop my tools several times to brighten the edge.

Newspaper is the finest sharpening surface a carver can use on their tool edges. It is the last step for me in any sharpening session.



- 1 coarse ceramic sharpening stone
- 2 fine ceramic sharpening stone
- 3 profiled wooden sharpening strop
- 4 emery cloth, 1500-grit, 600-grit
- 5 honing compounds
- 6 ceramic round fine stone, dowel rods
- 7 double-sided leather strop
- 8 synthetic strop

sharpening a two-edged blade



Bench knives, chip carving knives, and most whittling knives are two-edged blades - the cutting edge is beveled and honed on both sides of the blade, bringing the leading cutting edge to the center of the bevels.

Most chisels, round gouges, and v-gouges are single edged cutting tools. Here the bevel or angle of the cutting edge falls on only one side of the blade, with the second, un-beveled edge level with the tool shaft. We will look at sharpening single-edged tools later in this tutorial.

Whittle Fish Decoy Carving

Learn folk art ice fishing decoy carving with this in-depth step-by-step E-Project taught by Lora S. Irish. This sixty page E-Book includes an introduction to the history of ice fishing decoys, the six basic carving cuts needed to create these fun fish, and two complete projects. Complete your decoy with the painting steps and by creating a simple wire hanger.

60 pages of instructions, patterns, and ideas included are 20 small decoys patterns with fin variations, 4 long minnow decoy patterns, and 21 large full-sized decoy patterns accompanied by full-colored photos of the carved samples.

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basic sharpening overview



Stage One - Coarse Sharpening Stone

The coarse stone, 1000- to 2000-grit, establishes the bevel or angle of the cutting edge. For hardwood work you want a wide bevel between 20 to 25 degrees. Softwoods, as basswood or butternut, use a narrow bevel between 12 to 15 degrees. Coarse stone work also removes any dings or dents along the cutting edge.



Stage Two - Fine Stone Sharpening

A fine sharpening stone has a grit range between 6000 to 8000, and is used to refine the bevel to a sharp cutting edge. As the blade is pulled across the fine stone the coarse stone gouges are removed. During this stage a burr or tin edge will develop along the cutting edge, created from the thinning of the steel as the blade is pulled across the stone surface.



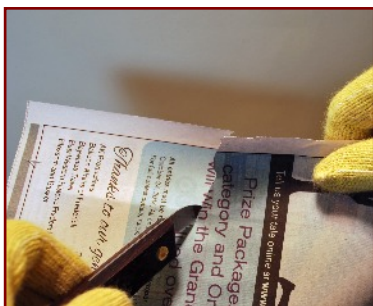
Stage Three - Leather Strop & Honing Compound

Honing compounds come in a variety of extra-fine grits. Rubbed on the raw side of the leather strop, it hones the blade edge to a fine point. As you work the blade across the strop, the burr or tin edge that you created in stages one and two will release, leaving a crisp, sharp cutting edge.



Stage Four - Newspaper

Several sheets of newspaper, folded into quarters, is used to brightly polish the cutting edge and to blend the cutting edge area smoothly into the unworked belly of the blade. The ink in heavily printed areas of the newspaper act as a lubricant or honing compound.



Stage Five - Testing the Cutting Edge

A well sharpened cutting edge will slice a sheet of free-floating newspaper. Because the cutting edge is much thinner than the thickness of the paper sheet, it will begin the cut into the paper with just the gentlest of hand pressures. If the newspaper edge folds or rolls, instead of cuts, the knife blade is not yet sharp.

step one- coarse stone beveling



1 Using a wide-point permanent marking pen, draw a line along both sides of the cutting edge of your bench knife. We will use the marking pen line to check the accuracy of both the coarse and fine stone beveling.



2 For a narrow, low bevel, as used in relief wood carving, lay the bench knife against the stone. Lift the back edge - blunt edge - of the knife above the stone to the thickness of four to five sheets of printer paper.



3 Pull the knife across the stone, working away from the cutting edge. Without changing the angle of the knife blade on the stone, bring the blade forward. This creates a long oval path for the blade. Use a firm pressure of the pull portion of the oval, and a lighter pressure on the return push stroke.



4 Depending on how dull the blade is, on average I will work between 15 to 20 strokes across the coarse stone before I check the blade.



5 Hold the knife edge over a sheet of white paper. Check along the edge of the blade to see how much of the marking pen ink remains, and where that ink falls along the edge. Any remaining ink shows where the knife blade has not touched the sharpening stone.



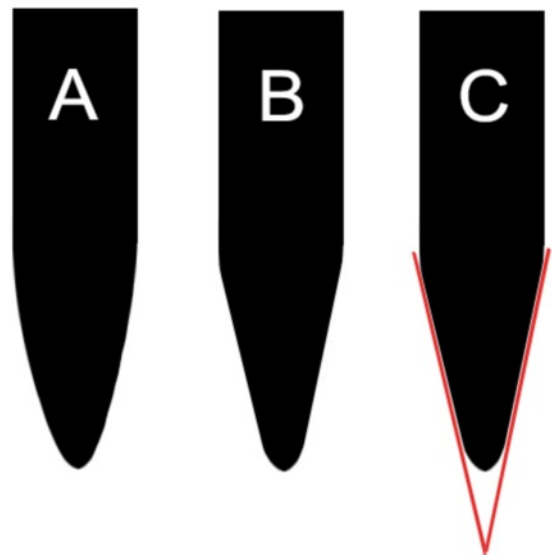
6 The coarse stone leaves visible, distinct working lines in the metal of the blade. In the photo, above, you can see the manufacturing lines of the blade, the ridges left from the coarse stone, and the unworked front cutting edge.

sharpening the sides of the knife

A As you use your carving knife, the cutting area will begin to belly out into a gentle curve. Wood is abrasive. In fact, we will be using a wood product, newspaper, as the last sharpening step of this tutorial.

B As you cut into your carving blank, you lightly polish the cutting edge and sides of the blade. So you not only lose the crisp cutting point to the blade, you also lose the straight sides of the bevel.

C The first working of the blade against the coarse stone removes the belly area, but may not remove enough steel to begin shaping the cutting edge.



7 If you have marking ink along your cutting edge, return to your coarse stone and work the knife blade in 15 to 20 more oval passes as described in steps 2 and 3. Use the same amount of air space between the blunt, back edge of the knife as you did in the first set of coarse stone work to retain the same bevel angle.

7



8 Check your edge against a sheet of white paper for any remaining marking pen ink. In the photo, right, you can see that even with a second set of coarse stone working my knife still has a narrow, unworked area right at the tip of the cutting blade.

8



9 Although the amount of marking ink has been reduced by half, the edge of the knife has still not come into contact with the coarse stone.

9



10 Since I still have marking pen ink along my cutting edge, I have returned to my coarse stone for a third set of oval passes.

Note in this photo that the areas of the stone that I have used for sharpening appear as medium gray, shiny areas of the surface. These areas are where the metal of the knife blade is being worked off the knife and onto the stone.

Since I want to sharpen my blade on the stone, not on the left-over metal shavings, I have moved to a clean, unused area of the stone for this step.

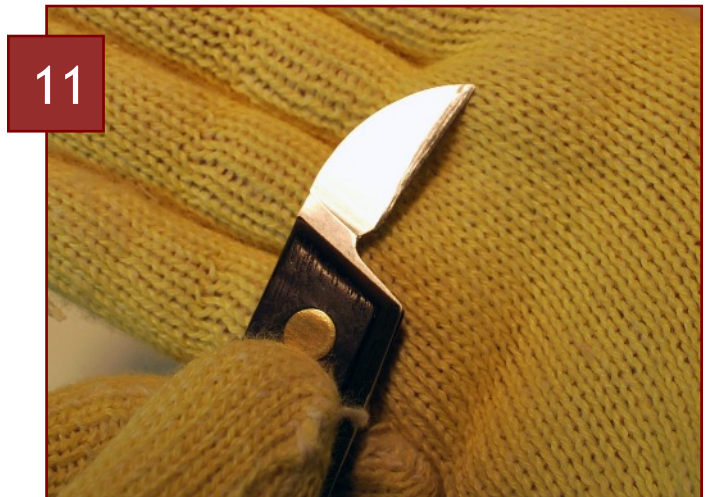
11 The third time was the charm for this side of the knife. On close inspection all of the marking pen ink has been removed, which means that all of the cutting edge of the blade has been worked.

work the second side

12 Turn your blade over and begin working the second side of the blade. Repeats steps 1 through 4 until you have worked all of the marking pen ink from the cutting edge.

marking pen magic

The coarse stone creates the cutting edge angle or bevel, but that bevel must reach the very edge of the tool. Using the marking pen ink as your guide insures that you create a full bevel to the blade. Even after three decades of wood carving and tool sharpening, in this tutorial you saw that it took me three sessions to remove all of the marking pen ink.



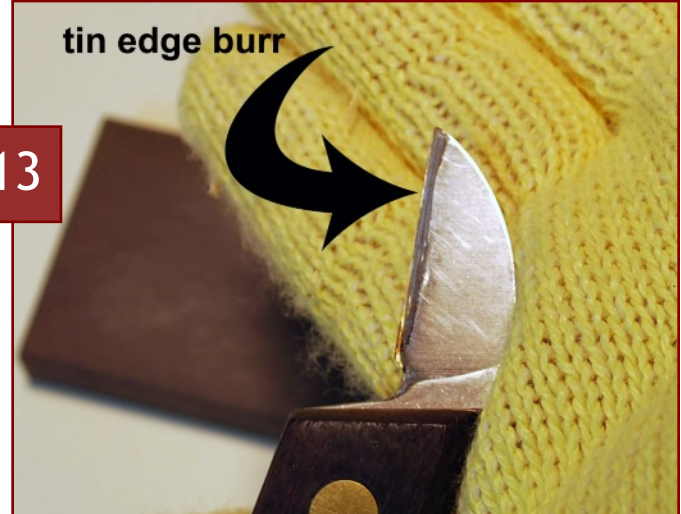
step two - creating the burr

13 As you work the knife blade across the coarse stone you thin the leading edge of steel. Some steel works off the blade and onto the stones, but a small amount becomes a very thin flap of metal right at the front cutting edge. That flap, called burr or tin edge, can be seen in photo 11 as an extremely thin bright white line.

The burr will become more pronounced as we move onto the fine-grit sharpening stone. You want to create a good burr, then remove that burr during the stropping steps.

14 Even if you can not see the burr at this stage you will be able to feel it. Run your finger from the back, blunt side of the blade towards the cutting edge. On one side of the blade you will feel a thin rough edge, that's the burr.

As the burr develops it becomes loosely hinged at the cutting edge. The hinged burr can be on either side of the knife.



a tin edge knife

A burr along the edge of a knife will leave the blade extremely dull. So dull that historically a carver would have said, "It cuts like a tin knife".

The burr begins to develop with the first strokes on the coarse stone. However, depending on the quality of steel, the burr may not be apparent until you have finished the fine stone strokes.

step three - fine stone edge sharpening

14



15



14 With both sides of your blade worked over the coarse stone, it is time to move onto the fine sharpening stone. Begin this step by drawing a wide line along the edge of the blade with the marking pen.

15 Place one side of the blade against the fine grit stone at the same angle - bevel - that you used on the coarse stone. Raise the blunt edge of your blade slightly higher from the stone. If you used a space of four to five sheets of paper for the coarse stone, raise the blade now to create an air space of five to six sheets.

This small lift in the blade resets the bevel a very small amount, just enough to re-work the steel along the edge.

16 Repeat steps 1 through 4, working the knife exactly as you did on the coarse stone, until you have sharpened the entire edge of the fine stone. Work these steps until all of the marking pen ink has been removed.

Turn the blade over and repeat for the second side. At this point you should have a noticeably prominent burr along the cutting edge.

coarse stone

fine stone

16



comparing stone grit polishes

Notice that the fine grit stone has begun to polish the edge of the blade steel. The fine stone removes more steel along the edge, and it grinds out the grit lines left from the coarse stone.

step four - honing and polishing

17 The leather strop has two surfaces - the raw leather side, and the tanned leather side. The raw leather side is made to receive honing compound.

There is a variety of honing compounds, each with its own specific purpose and grit size. Often when you purchase a strop a small stick of compound will be provided.

In my kit, I have red oxide which is shown in the photos. I also use a yellow compound which is similar to red oxide in grit, a jeweler's compound which is a coarse grit paste, and aluminum oxide power that is extremely fine and used with my synthetic strop.

Rub a layer of compound across the raw leather surface of your strop. Lay your knife blade onto the strop at the bevel angle that you used for your fine stone grinding.

Use a pull stroke only for the blade, applying medium to firm pressure. Hone the entire surface of the blade, not just the cutting edge.

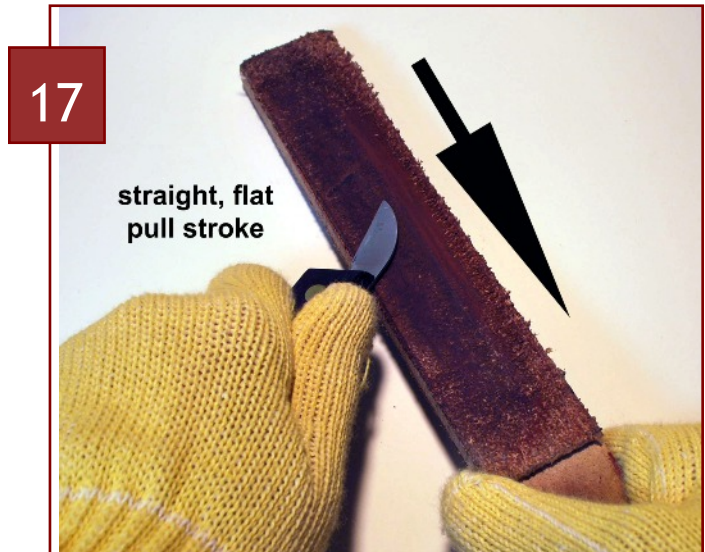
Work the blade with the pull stroke. Lift the blade from the strop, turn it over to the second side, and use a pull stroke.

This is a Pull - Lift - Turn - Lay Down - Pull motion.

Do not use a pull - flip - pull motion. This will roll the cutting edge of your blade over the strop and round over the crisp, sharp cutting edge that you have worked so hard to create.

18 Work the knife for about three or four minutes on the raw side of the strop, then turn the strop over and repeat on the tanned leather side. The tanned side uses no honing compound.

19 To complete this sharpening session, polish your blade by honing it on several folded sheets of heavily printed newspaper. Newspaper has an extremely fine grit the will create a bright, smooth polished surface.



Note in the two photos above that the knife is creating a black streak where it is drawn across the surface of the strop. That black streak is the extremely fine layer of metal that the strop removes.



step five - double check your cutting edge



20

20 We have discussed the burr or tin edge that working the stones creates on the cutting edge of your blade. This series of photos shows the development of that tin edge - see photo 20 and the bright white line at the tip of the blade.



21

21 Because the tin edge is extremely thin and hinges at the cutting edge, it can easily change sides. In photo 19 the tin edge does not show, yet when the chisel was turned over it is clearly visible.



22

22 During the honing process that tin edge breaks free and leaves a pristine, sharp cutting edge.

You may not be able to see the tin edge burr, but you will be able to feel it. Hold your blade between your thumb and forefinger. Move your fingers from the blunt side of the blade towards the cutting edge. You will feel a thin rough burr on one of the knife blade sides.

Repeat this check after you have stropped your blade to insure that the tin edge burr is gone.



Folk Art Fish Decoy E-Project
by Lora Irish

step six - the acid test !



23 The acid test for a sharp cutting edge is to hold one sheet of newspaper between your fingers. About two inches from your gripping hand, using a loose, light grip on your knife, slice through the top edge of the paper. If the paper bends instead of cuts, your blade is not sharp.

A. Your knife has a dull edge because during the stone work you did not bring the metal down enough for the edge to touch the stone. Using the marking pen eliminates this cause.

B. Your knife still has a tin edge burr. Use your fingers to double check for the burr, and if you can still feel that rough line return to your strop.

C. Your cutting edge has developed a rounded shape during the honing steps because you rolled and flipped the blade instead of lifting the blade between strokes. Return to the fine grit stone steps and rework the edge.

D. The bevel of the cutting edge is too wide. The wider the bevel angle at the cutting edge the more steel you are using at the cutting point. A wide bevel will fold the paper, because you are leading in with a knife blade thicker than the paper sheet.

If you have too wide a bevel, start over with the coarse stone and drop your blade closer to the stone.

on a personal note

Nearly twenty-five years ago my Dad taught me wood carving. It was one of his favorite hobbies, and he enjoyed years of carving rifle stocks and pistol grips.

The first lesson he insisted I learn, before I ever set knife to wood, was sharpening. As he often reminded me, “Wood carving is a dangerous hobby and the most dangerous tool is the dullest knife in your kit!”

A dull knife will cut wood, but as it does it grabs or digs into the wood causing you to apply more and more force to move the blade. When the cut is finally made, the leading edge of the knife can skip or pop out of the cut, out of control. That is when the cutting edge ends up causing you to be cut.

A sharp knife glides smoothly through the wood with only a medium, even pressure. This gives you total control over where the tool goes and when the cut ends.

The method I am sharing here is the same method he taught me. At the end of those first lessons he would hold up a sheet of newspaper and with one easy stroke slice the knife down through the page.

I would hold up the newspaper and watch with total frustration and horror as the paper folded over, untouched by the knife. “AHH!, Geez-zoo-flip, Dad, this is impossible!!!!”

He would just grin and say, “Go back and do it again.” Then after about five or six serious tries I cut my first sheet of newspaper.

So I share here his words, “Go back, do it again, soon you will be slicing newspaper with ease!”

sharpening a single-edged tool



Single-edged tools carry the cutting bevel on only one side of the tool blade. The opposite side is flush with the metal shaft of the tool. This grouping includes round gouges, u-gouges, v-gouges, and chisels.

As you work through this section, note that the majority of work on both the sharpening stones and the strop is done on the beveled cutting side of the blade tip.

Photo from L. S. Irish's free online tutorial

Canada Goose Relief Carving

Includes all patterns, step-by-step instructions,
and the full carving process from tracing the pattern
to painting your carving.

round gouges

1 Round gouges come in a variety of widths and arc sizes. Wide arced profiles are called sweeps or fish tails.

Narrow, tight arced profiles are called u-gouges or veining tools. They are all sharpened in the same manner.

There are several specialty tools for sharpening round and v-gouges. Shown in the photo are two profile honing boards, a round ceramic stone, and a 1/4" hardwood dowel that is used with emery cloth.



2 The beveled edge of a round gouge is found on the backside of the tool. This will be the edge that is sharpened. The inside edge of the round gouge is flush with the shaft, and will be worked only to remove the burr or tin edge.

Begin by marking the backside - beveled side - of the round gouge with your marking pen.



3 The back side of the round gouge is rolled across the sharpening stone or strop as you pull the gouge towards you - a double motion. Rolling the tool allows the entire cutting edge to come into contact with the sharpening stone.

I work my gouges by rolling once in one direction, followed by a roll in the opposite direction. This keeps the sharpening even all along the cutting edge.



4 Your round gouge comes with a pre-set bevel. Lay the bevel against the coarse stone. Pull the tool towards you, across the stone, rolling it along the bevel as you pull.

4



5 As you pull and roll, keep the bevel fully against the stone's surface. Return the tool to the top of the stone and work it in the opposite direction. If you rolled the tool to the left with the first pull, roll it to the right with the second pull stroke.

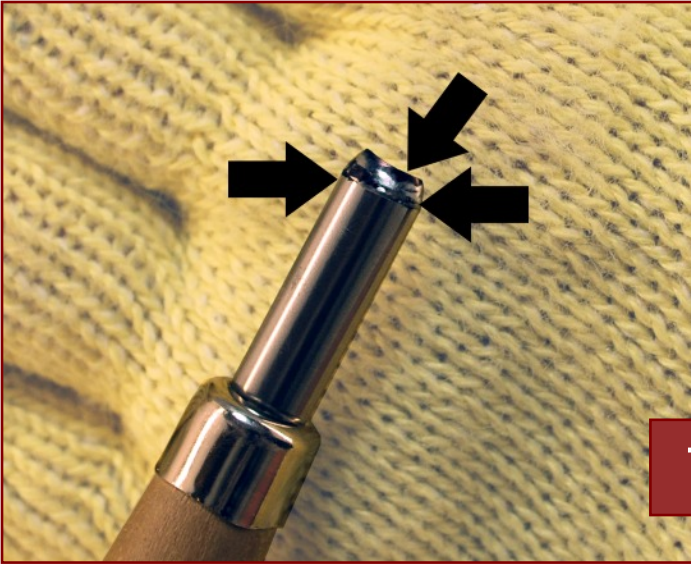
5



6 Work the gouge about fifteen to twenty times across the stone. Check the marking ink to insure that you have worked the entire beveled edge.

6

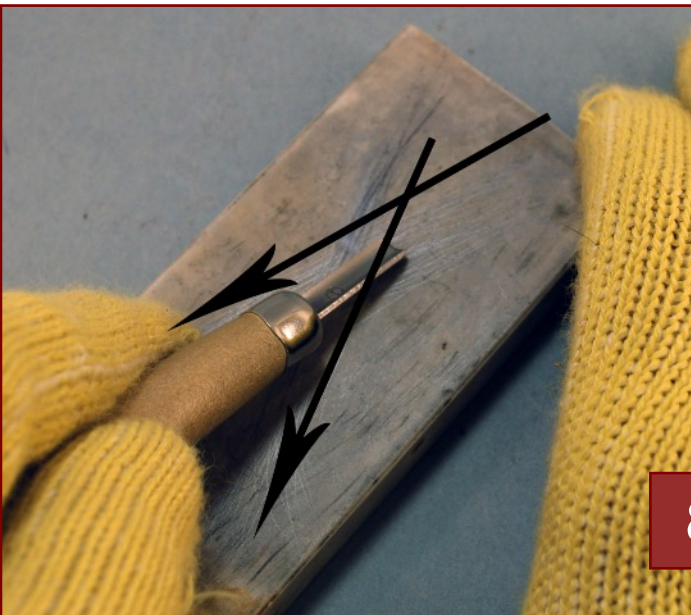




7 My marking ink shows in this photo that I still had a small area along the very top edge of the cutting profile that has not been worked on the coarse stone. Marking ink is also apparent on the two corners of the cutting tip on the inside edge of the bevel.

I returned my gouge to the coarse stone and re-worked it for about ten to fifteen more strokes. A second check showed that all of the marking ink had been removed.

Note, I have only worked the bevel side of the gouge.



8 Re-mark the bevel side of the round gouge with a marking pen. Begin working the gouge on the fine grit stone.

Work this step in the same manner as you did on the coarse stone, working about fifteen to twenty pulls, changing direction with each new pull.



9 A check of the marking pen ink shows that the entire cutting bevel on the back of the round gouge has been worked over the fine grit stone.

10 Working the gouge over the coarse and fine stone should have created a burr or tin edge on the inside - bowl area - edge of the gouge.

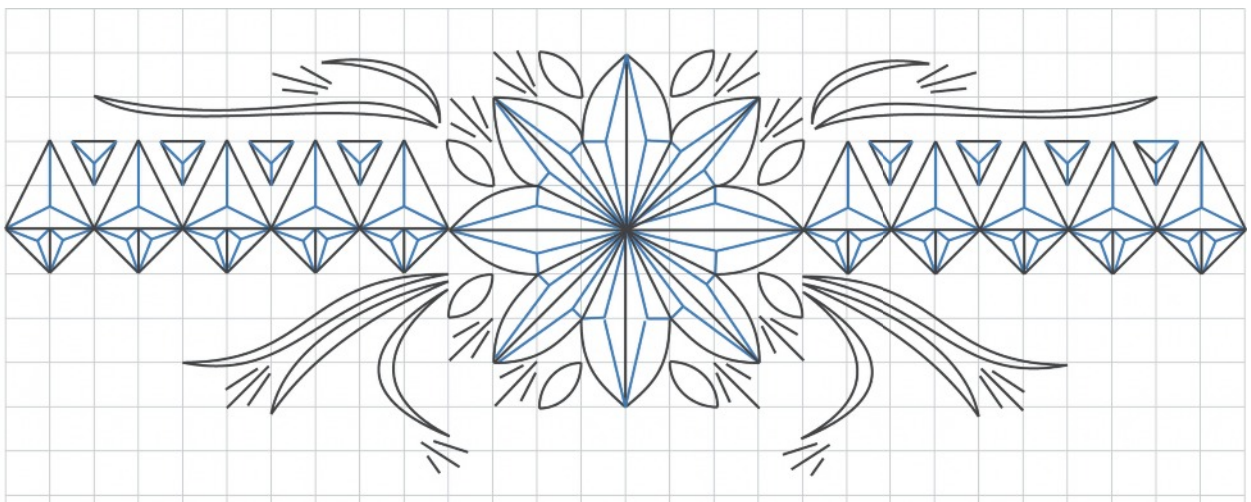
Run your finger from the back of the gouge towards the cutting edge. You should be able to feel the burr.

10



11 Because I am working with marking pen ink, you can see where the ink has become caught by the burr edge on the inside, bowl of the tip of the blade.

11



Chip Carving E-Project by Lora Irish, Available only at ArtDesignsStudio.com



12

12 Prepare the raw leather side of your strop with honing compound.



13

13 Rub honing compound along both side edges of the raw leather.



14

14 Strop the bevel side of the round gouge across the raw side of the leather strop, using the same roll and pull motion as you did on the stones. Work the tool for five to six strokes.



15

15 Turn the gouge over, and lay the tool against the edge of the leather. Pull the gouge towards you to move the burr forward, away from the tool edge. Work the gouge two to three times along the strop edge.

Repeat steps 14 and 15 several times.



16

16 Move your gouge onto the tanned side of the strop, and using a pull and roll motion, work the bevel side about five to six times.

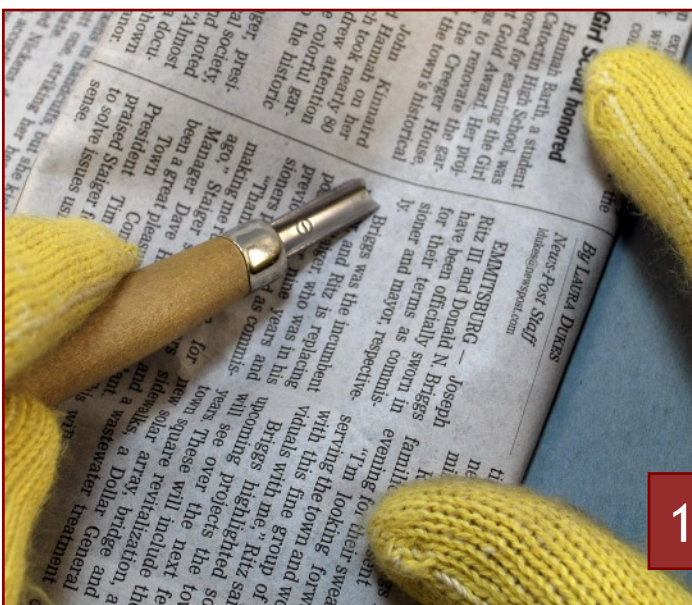


17

17 Turn the gouge over and place the bowl side of the gouge against the edge of the leather, pull two to three times.

Repeat steps 16 and 17 several times.

By working back and forth from the beveled side to the bowl side, you will loosen and break the burr, leaving a crisp, sharp cutting edge.



18

18 Finish the sharpening of your round gouge by pulling the bevel side across several sheets of folded newspaper. This polishes the cutting edge.

19 Roll a sheet of newspaper around a hardwood dowel that fits the size of your gouge arc. Lay the bowl side of the gouge against the paper-covered dowel and pull away from the cutting edge.

This polishes the inside bowl edge. The sharpening on your round gouge is complete.

19



20 Instead of a flat leather strop you can use a honing board. Honing boards have pre-cut profiles for stropping round gouges, u-gouges, and v-gouges.

Rub a layer of honing compound into the correct profile cut. Lay your round gouge against the honing board profile and pull the tool towards you. Work each side of your gouge five to six times to create a bright polish.

Honing boards do not sharpen your gouges, they only help to remove the burr and polish the cutting edge.

20

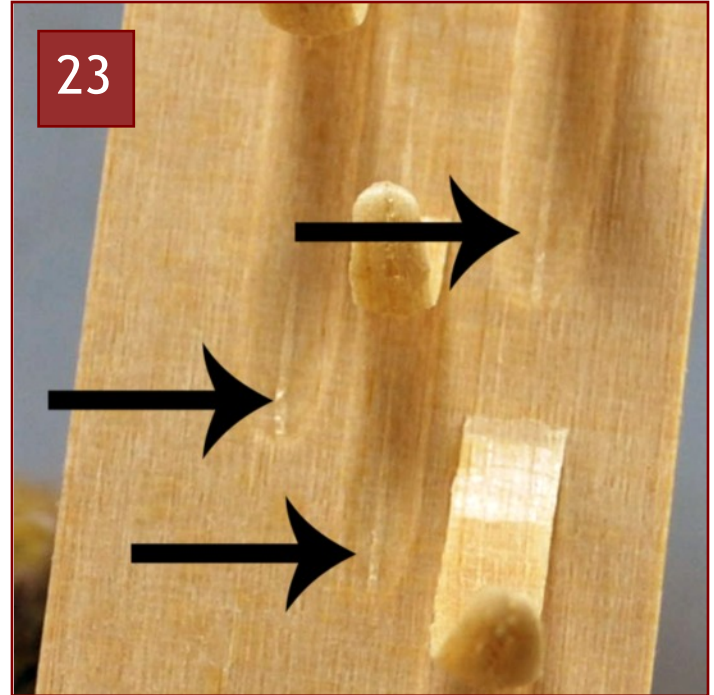


21 You can purchase ceramic and natural sharpening stones that are pre-made to fit the inside profile of your gouges. The photo shows a ceramic round stone that fits my medium round gouge.

Because the cutting bevel of the round gouge is on the back side of the tool, this stone is used only to re-position or remove the tin edge burr. Over working a gouge on a round stone will create a new bevel inside the bowl of the gouge, causing you to lose the cutting edge.

21





22 - 24 During any sharpening session I often have some scrap basswood near at hand to do an actual cutting test on the blade.

In photo 22 the tool cut well. But close inspection, photo 23, shows a bright white line down the center of each of the cut troughs. That line is caused by a small, remaining piece of the burr or tin edge, and that burr is scratching the surface of the wood as the gouge passes through the cut.

In photo 24 I returned the raw side of my strop and re-worked steps 14 through 18. A second cutting test shows a clean, perfect cut.



v-gouges

1 The v-gouge has two straight chisel-like sides bent at an angle at the mid-point. The v-gouge shown in the photo is a 90 degree bend.

They are single-beveled tools with the beveled cutting edge of the back side of the gouge. The inside of the gouge is level with the metal shaft.

2 Begin by marking along the beveled cutting edge on the back side of your v-gouge with a marking pen.

Three common problems show up when you are sharpening a v-gouge.

First, only sharpen the beveled side of the gouge. Sharpening both the outside - beveled side - and the inside of the gouge creates a double edge, causing you to lose the sharpness along the cutting edge.

Second, as shown in step 7, the burr or tin edge of the v-gouge develops not only along the straight edges but also at the center cutting point. By pulling your gouge across a honing board or across the edge of your leather strop several times during both the coarse and fine stone work, you move the burr forward where it can more easily be released.

And third, be sure to work both chisel sides of the v-gouge evenly so that they meet at the center point in a straight, even edge.

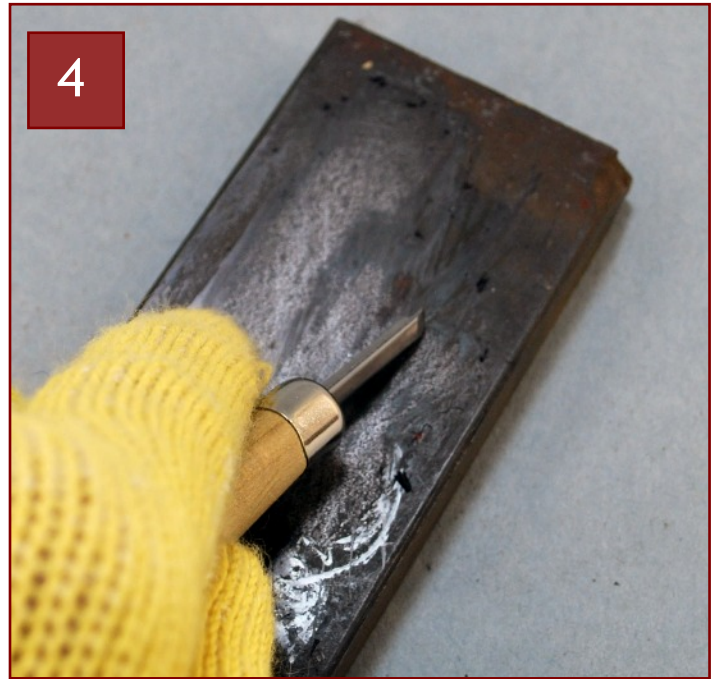
Overworking one side as compared to the other can cause a small protrusion at the center point. That protrusion, even if sharp, will prevent your v-gouge from making a clean cut.

When necessary work the taller, protrusion side several times on the coarse stone until your cutting edge has returned to a straight smooth line.





3 Lay one side of the v-gouge against the coarse stone, with the pre-set bevel flat to the stone's surface. Pull the gouge towards you.



4 Pick up the gouge and turn it over to the second side of the beveled back. Again, place the pre-set bevel flat against the stone. Pull towards you.

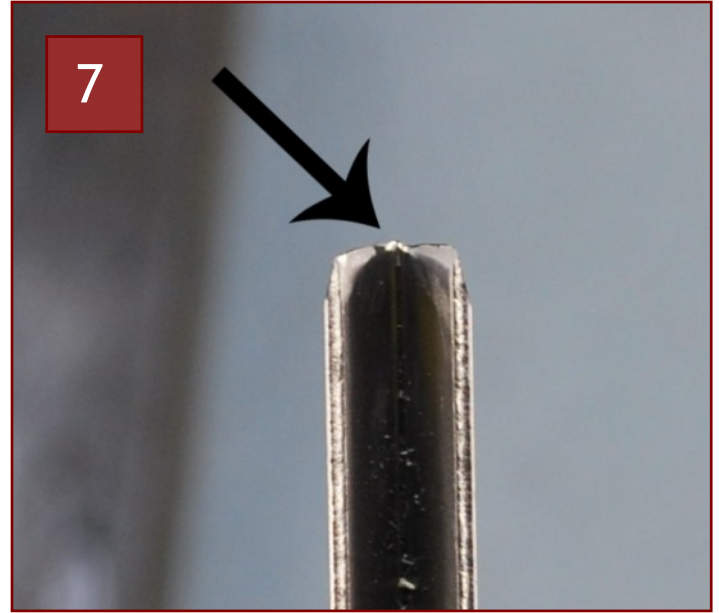
Work one side then the other for fifteen to twenty pulls across the coarse stone.



5 Checking my marking pen ink, I can see that I have only worked the top 1/3 of the blade against the stone. I will repeat the steps above, 3 and 4, for another fifteen to twenty strokes until I have removed all of the marking ink.



6 As you change sides on your v-gouge be sure to fully lift it from the stone before you turn it over. Do not use a 'flip' motion as this can roll the point of the v against the stone, rounding it over.



7 In this photo you can see the bright white spot at the center point of the v on the inside of the gouge. This is the beginning of the burr or tin edge.

Also in this photo you can see that the tops of the two sides are not even. The taller side needs more work on the coarse stone.



8 To control the burr or tin edge, pull your v-gouge just once or twice across the v-profile on your honing board or along the edge of the tanned leather side of your strop.

This moves the burr forward, helping the burr to begin weakening.



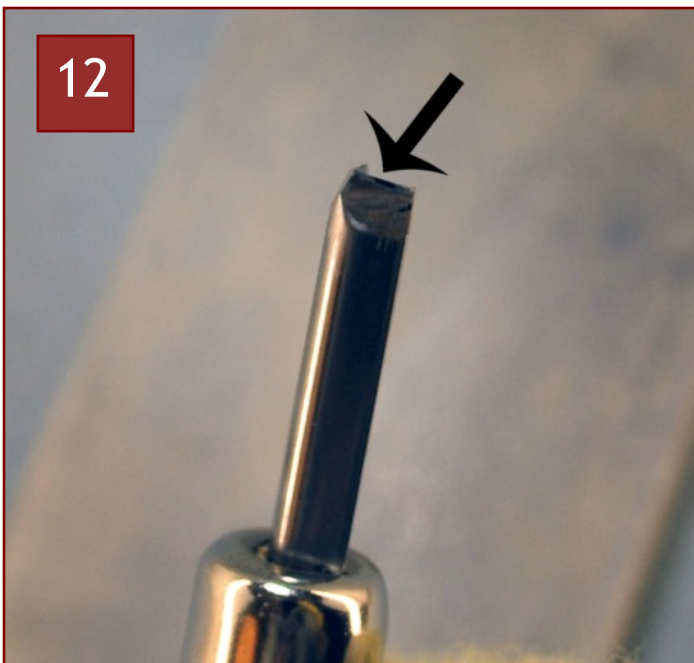
9 I have returned to my coarse stone to work the high side of the cutting edge.



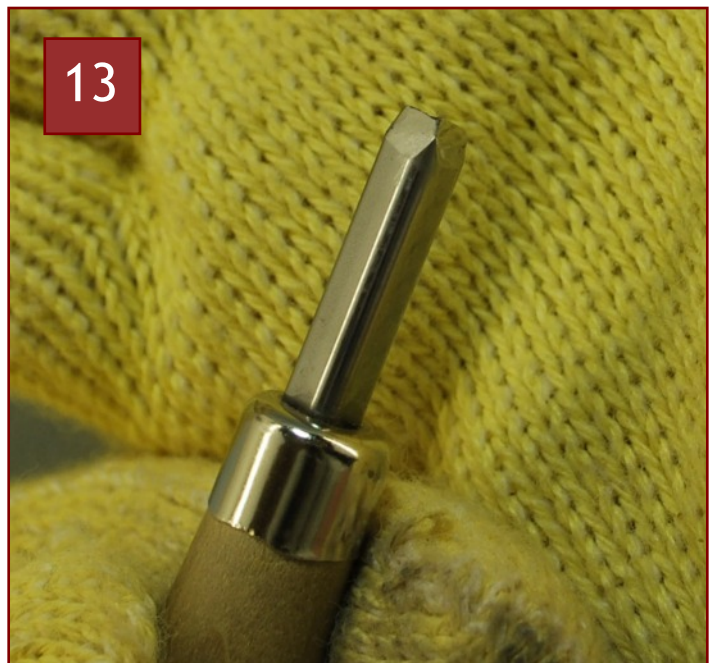
10 Remark the beveled side of the v-gouge with your marking pen.



11 Begin working the two sides of the v-gouge on the fine stone. Work one side, pick up the gouge, turn it over, and work the second side using a pull stroke.



12 After about fifteen to twenty strokes per side, I still have a small amount of ink remaining. I returned to the fine stone and repeated step 11 until all of the ink was removed.



13 On my second ink check for the fine stone I have worked the tool until all the ink has been removed, and the two beveled sides of the v-gouge are even at the center point.



14 Prepare the raw leather side of your strop with honing compound. Work the beveled sides of the v-gouge against the strop just as you did on the stones.

Again, pull, lift, turn, and pull the second side.



15 Prepare both edges of the raw leather with honing compound. Place the inside of the v-gouge against the edge and pull. Move the v-gouge to the other edge of the strop and pull. This cleans the inside of both sides of the v.



16 Move your v-gouge to the tanned leather side of the strop and work for about fifteen to twenty strokes (no photo).

Polish the beveled sides of the v-gouge on several sheets of folded newspaper.



17 Fold several sheets of newspaper over a small plywood board. Lay the inside edges of the v-gouge against the wood board corner, pull to polish the inside.

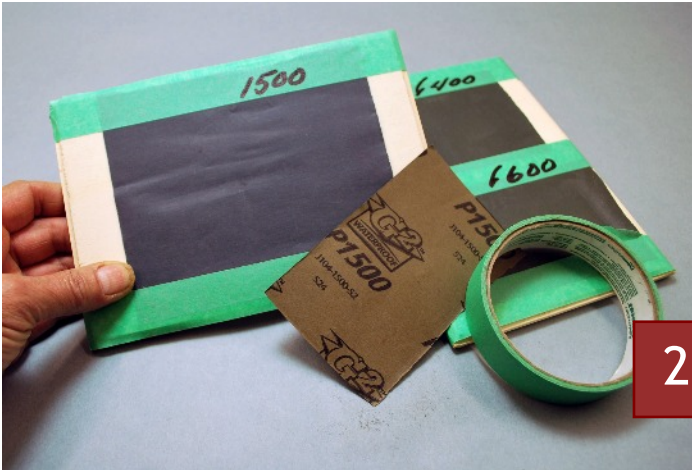
single-edge chisels & working with emery cloth



1

1 We have worked so far using ceramic sharpening stones, and these are my preferred sharpening system. But you may also use emery cloth, a sandpaper made specifically for metal, especially if you are just starting your carving hobby.

Emery cloth comes in a large variety of grits. You want a range of grits from 400 as your coarse paper to 1500 or more for your fine paper.



2

2 Tear or cut the emery cloth into small squares around 4" by 6" in size. Tape these small sheets to a scrap of plywood using masking tape or painters tape.

Using a marking pen note the grit size of each sheet of emery cloth on the tape.



3

3 Begin by marking the beveled side of your straight chisel with your marking pen.

The first sharpening of your straight chisel is on your coarsest grit emery cloth. For my sample that is my 400-grit.

Lay the beveled edge of the chisel flat against the emery cloth, pull the tool towards you. Repeat for about fifteen to twenty strokes.



4 and 5 Check your beveled side for marking pen ink. If necessary return to your coarse paper and sharpen again.

6 As the burr or tin edge develops the polishing grit from the emery cloth will built up along the edge, allowing you to see the burr.

Continue sharpening, working through each progressively fine grit of emery cloth.

In my samples, I worked the 400-grit until I had removed all of the marking ink. Then I re-inked the beveled cutting side and worked the chisel of the 600-grit. After a third inking, I worked the cutting edge on the 1500-grit cloth.



7

7 Move to your strop and work the beveled side of the chisel for about fifteen strokes on the raw leather side.

Turn the chisel over and work the back edge of the chisel to move the burr forward. Return to the chisel to its beveled side and re-strop.

Move onto the tanned leather side and repeat, working the beveled side for ten or so strokes, then a couple of strokes on the straight side.

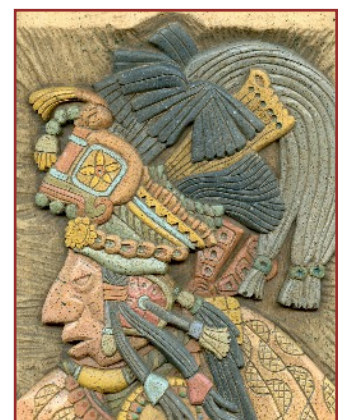
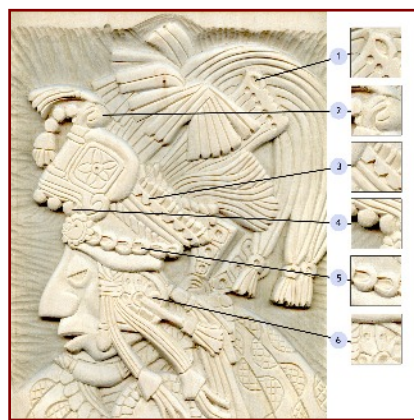


8

8 Finish your chisel with a polishing on several sheets of folded newspaper.

You can use your emery cloth for several sharpening sessions, but it does lose its grit quickly.

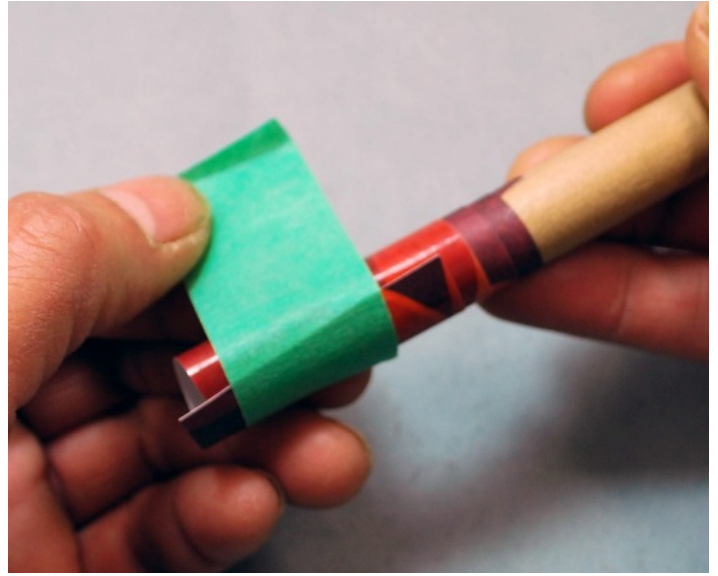
Mayan High Priest Relief Carving, Beginner's Carving E Project, by Lora Irish



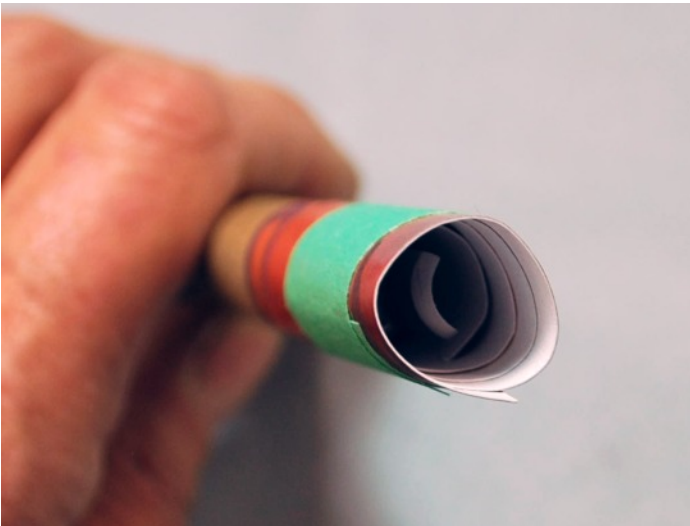
protecting your sharp edges



Protect your newly sharpened edge of your tools by wrapping them in scrapbook paper or manilla folder.



Cut the scrapbook paper into a 2" x 6" long strip. Roll the paper around the handle of your tool, at an angle so that the paper rolls up and over the cutting edge.



A piece of masking tape or painters tape will hold the paper in the rolled shape without damaging your tool handle.



cleaning your stones

Sharpening stones quickly accumulate a layer of metal from the process of rubbing the blade across the stone's surface. Each stone is cleaned according to what type of material the stone is made from and depending on what type, if any, lubricant is used on the stone.

Ceramic stones are easy to clean. Take them to the kitchen sink after each sharpening session. Using a steel wool soap pad and warm water, wash the stones until all of the shine from the metal is removed. Dry with a towel and they are ready for use.

Most natural stones can be cleaned using dish washing detergent and hot water. If the stone has been lubricated with oil you may need to soak the stone for an hour to loosen the old, crusted film of accumulation.

Japanese water stones and some soft manmade composite stones are cleaned by sanding the surface on a medium grit, cloth-backed sandpaper.



cleaning your strop

Over time your strop will develop a thick layer of used stropping compound and the leather fibers will become compressed. To re-freshen your strop use a dull bladed knife - either a knife that has lost its edge or an old serrated kitchen knife.

Pull the knife across the raw leather side of the strop, scrapping away the old compound. Work the strop until you can see the fibrous grain of the leather over the entire surface.

Lift the knife so that you are working the raw leather with just the edge of the knife. Scrap several more times to open the fibers of the raw side.

The tanned leather side can be washed clean using a mild dishwashing detergent and warm water. Dip a wash cloth into the soapy water, then rub the cloth across the leather surface until all of the black metal residue has been removed.

Do not drench or submerge it in the strop in the soapy water. Over saturation can cause the glue that holds the leather to the wood to soften.

Lightly rinse with clean water and dry well with a towel.



flattening your strop



The leather on your strop can develop ridges as you pull the gouge, knife, or chisel across its surface. Those ridges can cause uneven honing on your cutting edge.

To flatten those ridges simply pull one of your sharpening stones, or the handle of one of your tools over the surface using a firm, strong pressure. Work the stone several times, in both directions, to raise the raw leather nap.



If you have several different honing compound stick, each with a different grit, they can become contaminated as you draw them across the raw leather surface of the strop. Using 220- or 150- grit sandpaper, the residue of the other compounds can be sanded off your compound stick, leaving a clean, fresh surface.

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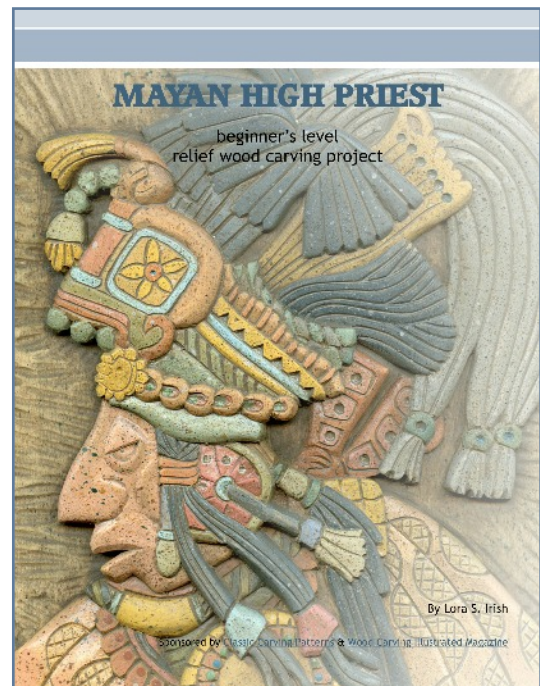
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