



KNIFE SHARPENING

Sharp tools are safe tools, and taking care of each tool is paramount for creating projects. Nothing will be more frustrating than carving with dull tools. Dull tools are unsafe because they force a user to apply more force to carve. Accidents may occur. This workshop will show some of the basics of sharpening and caring for your tools.

Supplies

- Wooden dowels
- Leather
- Honing compound
- Emery paper – 1000-, 2000-grit

Tools

- DMT Diamond Stones 200, 600, 1200
- Strop
- Your gouges and knives
- Cloth or old t-shirts

Safety

- Eye protection
- Dust mask
- Safety boots

Procedure

There are different methods for sharpening your tools. I find this is a good first step into sharpening gouges, bent knives and adzes. I keep my sharpening gear close by and I have seen shops that have a table set up just for sharpening. It is a great habit to sharpen your tools daily and often will be done throughout your day in the carving shop.

Diamond Stones come in various grits for sharpening or fixing chipped blades. You will not need honing oil, just the stone.

A **Strop** is a leather band that hones the blade after sharpening.

Honing Compound is used on your leather strop to bring your knives to a mirror finish.

Emery Paper is abrasive paper like sandpaper that comes in high grits in the range of 800 – 2000. It is used for high polish finish to remove burrs and create a mirror like finish.

Wooden Dowels are used in various lengths and diameters to hold the emery paper.

You can sometimes attach the emery paper to a piece of glass with glue. Doing so provides a flat surface on which you may run your tools. Cut 4mm glass that is 4" x 8" with rounded edges. Can be ordered at a glass store. Ask if the store has off cuts in that size. The store clerks can usually find some for a few dollars.

Knives

Traditional tools like bent knives are usually double beveled and flat on the bottom. They can be easily sharpened with emery paper wrapped around a dowel. Dowels can be any size depending on the size of the bent knife. You can use 800- to 2000-grit emery paper found at a local hardware store. The rougher grits can be used to take small knicks out of the blade in combination with a diamond stone.

1. Hold the knife in one hand and the dowel in the other. Find the plane of the bevel on which to rest the dowel. Follow along the back of the blade to the tip. Repeat as necessary on each side finishing with the 2000-grit.
2. The bottom on the blade can be run along the same grits of emery paper ending with 2000-grit, working from the back of the blade to the tip.
3. Rub some of the honing compound onto the leather piece and lightly run the blade across the leather a few times. This process will take out any burrs that you may have created. Don't overuse the strop. Over-honing a blade can dull it.

Adze Blades

The adze blade we have made in the project book has a flat back with a small bevel on the bottom side of the blade. The larger bevel is on the topside, so you will need to find a place to keep your diamond stone or emery paper flat while maintaining room for the handle to move back and forth.

1. Hold the adze so that the handle is pointing down. Grasp the blade with two hands and run the bevel side to side in an arc across the face of the diamond stone or emery paper. After a few passes, you will see where the blade contacts the diamond stone or emery paper. Adjust as necessary to get the right angle to sharpen the blade. If using emery paper, continue using the paper until you have reached the 2000-grit. Flip the adze over and repeat the process on the small bevel.
2. Rub some of the honing compound onto the strop and lightly run the blade across the leather a few times. This process will take out any burrs that you may have created. Don't overuse the strop. Over-honing a blade can dull it.

Gouges

Gouges come in all sort of shapes and sizes. The trick to sharpening them is to keep the bevel flat across the sharpening stone, slips, and emery paper. The top side of your gouge, the flute, will also need honing. Depending on the gouge's curve, you will need to use different dowels wrapped in emery paper.

1. Hold the gouge so that the handle is pointing down. Grasp the blade with two hands and run the bevel side to side in an arc across the face of the diamond stone or emery paper.
2. After a few passes, you will see where the blade contacts the diamond stone or emery paper. Adjust as necessary to get the right angle to sharpen the blade. If using emery paper, continue using the paper until you have reached the 2000-grit. Flip the adze over and repeat the process on the small bevel.
3. Rub some of the honing compound onto the strop and lightly run the the blade across the leather a few times. This process will take out any burrs that you may have created. Don't overuse the strop. Over-honing a blade can dull it.

Care for your tools

Tool rolls will keep your carving sets in place and will protect your hands when you reach into your toolbox. Most tool rolls will have individual packets for each knife or gouge and a flap that will come down over top of each tool when you roll it up. I go one step further and use an old t-shirt (better yet, an old cotton baby blanket [for some reason they stick together better] to wrap each end of the tool). Wrapping does a couple things – one, it protects the rolls from being cut by a sharp blade. Wraps are also added protection for your fingers when you unroll and grab your favourite tool – it's a visual remainder that the tools are sharp!

I always have my tool rolls in a toolbox designated for my carving tools. It is a great and safe way to transport them to and from jobs or to the carving shed. I always, always wrap and roll my tools at the end of each carving session, especially if I am sharing a space with others – properly storing tools is safe practice and keeps your tools from being handled when you are not around. If you have made your own carving knives, you know how long it has taken to make one. An accidental drop on the floor and you may have to make another or spend a considerable amount of time fixing it.

Respect the tools, keep them sharp, and, most of all, have fun creating!

