



Beginner Wood Carving

*EBOOK TO GET YOU STARTED
(FOR ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS)*

BY ELI PEARLMAN & NAMGYAL SCHAAF

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CONGRATULATIONS

On Purchasing your Schaaf Full Size Wood Carving Tools Set!

This ebook will give absolute beginners a small introduction to wood carving. It covers the best types of woods for getting started, pros and cons of the different sharpening stones on the market, tips for sharpening your tools and keeping them in good shape, and a few solid resources to help you on your way to becoming a master carver! We've kept this book bite sized – your first stepping stone, and by no means an all encompassing guide.



The Schaaf Tools Beginner Wood Carving eBook to Get You Started has been published by Schaaf Tools. Our company endeavored to make a quality carving tools set that was also affordable. We were unhappy with what was available on the market, realizing that the cheaper sets were poorly made, but the quality sets were too expensive for your average beginner.

We're glad you've chosen to give us a chance, and we don't think you'll regret it. But we are a new company, so feedback is appreciated, as we are constantly trying to improve and perfect our gouges.



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5 TYPES OF WOOD FOR CARVING

The wood you use will differ in its color, grain and hardness. It's best not to sit down with a random piece of wood, or something too hard when you're just starting out. Set yourself up for success with a block that holds detail and is relatively easy to carve. We're going to focus on Basswood, Butternut, White Pine, Black Walnut and Aspen. Not only are these woods recommended for beginners, but they're also fairly inexpensive.

BASSWOOD (LINDEN)

Basswood is a soft wood that still holds detail well, so its a perfect block to get started on if you're a beginner. It's light cream colored, with streaks of brown, and has a smooth, even grain. Basswood seldom warps, so its ideal for both large and small carvings, and its cheap and easy to find in hobby shops as well.



BUTTERNUT (WHITE WALNUT)

Butternut (sometimes called white walnut) is a soft wood that holds detail well. The sapwood (living outermost layer) is white, while the heartwood (inner wood) is light brown, with occasional dark brown streaks. It has a medium coarse texture, with a distinct, straight pattern. Butternut is easy to work with hand tools, but be aware it can dull tools quickly, so have your sharpening stones at the ready.



ASPEN

Aspen is another soft wood – not quite as soft as Basswood – but still easy to carve. Again, this wood holds detail well, and has a white coloring and nice straight grain. Aspen trees grow all over the place, so their wood is cheap and pretty easy to find. Inexpensive blanks can be found at most hobby shops.



WHITE PINE

White Pine is another good option for those of you just getting into hand carving. Its another soft wood that holds detail well (are you seeing a theme here yet?) with a medium grain and light cream color. Some people have trouble with pine cracking as it dries out, so if you've finished a carving you like, dry it out slowly, or seal it after a few days.



BLACK WALNUT

Black Walnut is popular, but a bit more expensive than the previous choices. And although its a little harder (this wood is quite sturdy and heavy) it is still straight grained and fairly easy to carve. Walnut has a rich, dark brown color with a beautiful natural finish.



Every carver's ideal wood is different. And remember, each wood has its own benefits. As you continue carving, try a few different types of wood to get a sense for what you prefer, and what works best for which project.

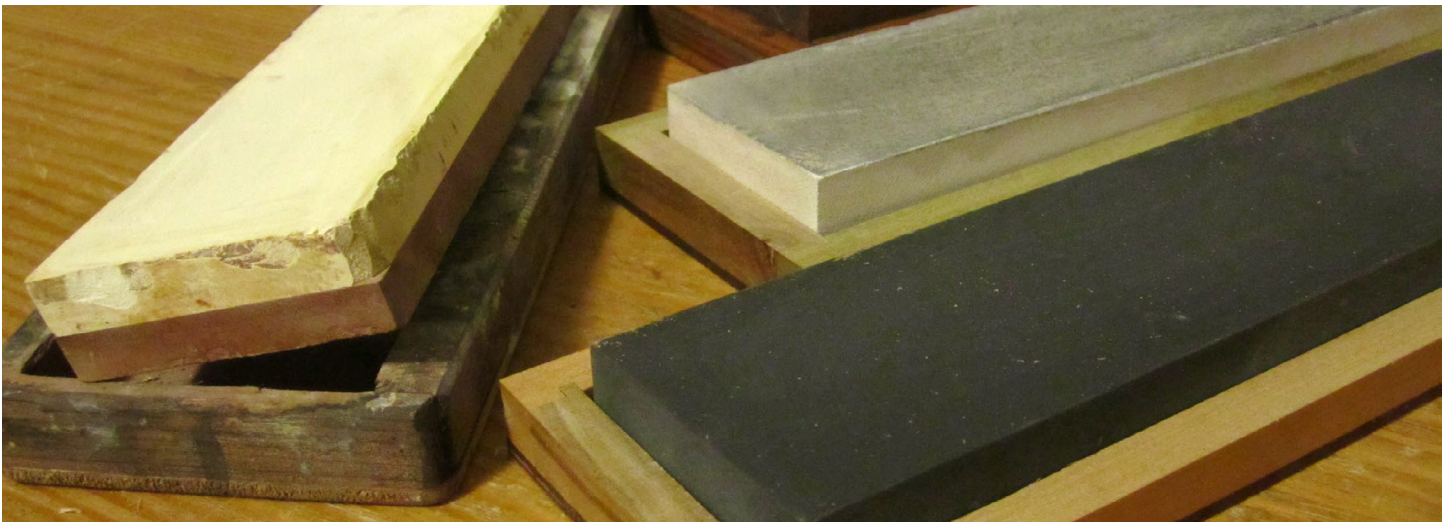


SHARPENING STONES

STONE BASICS:

There are three grades of sharpening stone: coarse, medium and fine – the coarser the cutting crystals (grit) the greater the quantity of metal removed and faster the cut. A combination stone (one side coarse, the other fine) is the most inexpensive option to get you started. Don't worry about the medium grade stone for now, as it is often left out of the process. We recommend buying the largest surface size stone that is available. This will be easier to use with the wide range of tools we've provided in your Schaaf Tools set.

OILSTONES



Traditional oilstones have been popular for years. Today you can buy natural oilstones or man-made ones. Generally, oilstones are found in coarse, medium and fine grades. Natural stones meanwhile are available in grades Soft Arkansas, Hard Arkansas, and Hard Translucent Arkansas. The harder the grade, the finer the grit of the stone. Natural stones are finer grits than the man-made stones, so its common to have both types in your sharpening kit.

If you decide to use oilstones, you'll also need oil, which is used to wash away the abraded particles of stone grit and metal. The best oil to use is light lubricating oil like the oil used for bicycles. Wipe it off with a cotton rag as you sharpen before applying fresh oil.

Pros:

- Relatively inexpensive
- Stay flat longer than waterstones

Cons:

- Slower cutting
- Use oil as lubricant
- Can be messy

WATERSTONES



Waterstones can also be found in the man-made or natural variety, however the man-made stones are more common. Waterstones are softer, and thus cut faster than oilstones, which is one of the reasons they've grown in popularity. While a softer stone means faster sharpening, it also means you have to flatten your waterstones more regularly. As the name suggests, these stones use water to remove the abraded particles, which is easier to clean up and more convenient to use than oil.

Pros:

- Even less expensive than oil stones
- Cut quickly
- Water as lubrication
- Available in very fine grits

Cons:

- Wear quickly
- Need to be flattened often
- Can also be messy

WHY WE RECOMMEND USING A DIAMOND STONE

1. Diamond stones will sharpen you tools faster and more efficiently than any other type of sharpening stone.



2. Diamond stones are easier to maintain than any other type of stone - no soaking, flattening or work-space cleanup after use.



3. Diamond stones don't get dished out like other sharpening stones so they'll last longer and you won't have to re-flatten them before every use.



If you'd like to see the double sided diamond stone from Schaaf Tools, here's a link:

<https://www.schaaftools.com/products/schaaf-tools-400-1000-grit-diamond-sharpening-stone-8-x-3-inches-universal-base-ebook-included>

Even though Diamond stones (all of which are man-made) have been around for a while now, they're still considered the new kids on the block. These stones provide a few unique advantages over your more traditional water and oilstones and are extremely versatile. They are able to sharpen any woodworking tool, and because they don't wear unevenly, they can also be used to flatten both oil and waterstones. Diamond stones, like waterstones, use water to remove the abraded particles.



Pros:

- Fast cutting
- Good for large gouges
- Stay flat so you don't have to worry about flattening after use
- Use water as lubrication
- Can flatten other stones

Cons:

- Very difficult to sharpen small gouges
- Final cutting edge not as keen
- Initial cost

CERAMIC STONES



Ceramic stones are a common choice for professional carvers, but, just like all previous options, they have a wide range of advantages and disadvantages. One advantage, for instance, is that they require no lubrication. Ceramic stones also remain flat, and clean up easily with soap and water. If you take care of a ceramic stone, it should last forever. On the other hand, they're a little more expensive, fragile, and because they're only widely available in fine grits, you'll have to supplement with a rougher stone.

Pros:

- You can use them dry
- Easy to clean
- Fine grit, leaves a well polished edge
- Hard surface stays flat longer than other stones (other than diamond stones)

Cons:

- Only available in fine grits
- Coarse grits fill up and don't work as well over time
- Brittle, easily broken

SLIPSTONES (SLIPS)



Slips are small, specifically shaped stones that work the inside of gouges and v-tools. While it will be useful to eventually accumulate a variety of slips to sharpen gouges and v-tools with differing sweeps and sizes, for now you can just start with a few of the essentials, or even just a single slipstone that has one rounded side and one corner (for v-tools).

STROPS



The strop is used to give a final, finished sharpness to the cutting edge. The best strops are made from leather, and dressed with a fine abrasive (nearly any type will do). Hold the abrasive to the leather with some form of lard or oil (tallow or Vaseline both work well). After stropping, your tools will be ready to carve.

Remember, well sharpened tools will give you more control, leave a more polished cut, and be safer to use. Basically, if you put in the work early, it will make for a much more enjoyable all around experience.

Our tools will be factory sharpened out of the box. That means you can get started on your first project right away. However, like any tools you purchase, they'll be more effective if you hone them a bit yourself first. Either way, eventually you will need to learn how to do some sharpening yourself. In fact, until relatively recently, there was no such thing as ready-sharpened woodcarving tools. Tools came with a roughly ground bevel, and it was assumed the carver would sharpen and grind them to fit their own needs.

One master wood carver said that when pricing a piece of work, he would allow up to one third of the allotted time for sharpening and maintaining his tools.

SHARPENING: A NECESSARY PART OF WOOD CARVING



How crazy is that!?

For every 40 minutes of actual carving, he would spend 20 minutes honing his tools.

Sharpening tools isn't a difficult or complicated endeavor, and can be cathartic or even enjoyable if you take a little time to learn how to do it right.

THE BEVEL

When watching a video or reading about sharpening, you'll hear a lot about the bevel; how its angled, if its too steep, etc...The bevel is the shape taken by the supporting metal as it thins down to the cutting edge.

When sharpening, the bevel is often neglected by beginners, who have a tendency to sharpen only the very edge of the tool. Getting the bevel the right shape and angle, however, is also an important part of sharpening correctly.

As you carve, you may find that the bevel needs adjusting to fit the ideal working angle for your project. If you're a beginner wondering "how the heck do I regrind a bevel?" don't worry! Bevel angle is largely determined by the hardness of the wood you're using, with an angle of 20-25 degrees being ideal for most woods. With that in mind, Schaaf Tools gouges will come with a pre-ground bevel angle of 23 degrees, and most nice sets will have a similar angle. If you're working with a cheaper set, you may want to go out and buy yourself a protractor, or one of these handy tools to measure the angle of your bevel.



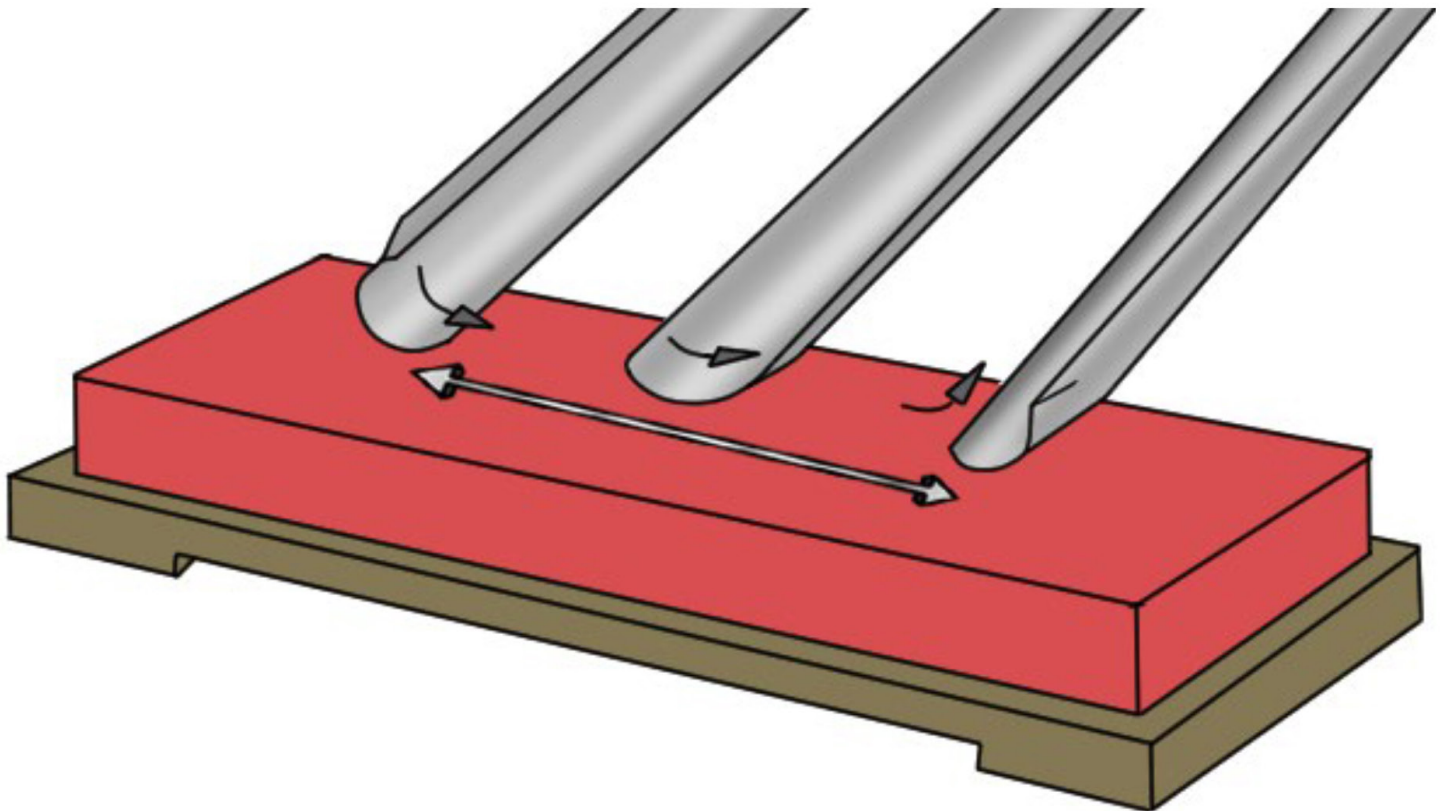
THE SHARPENING PROCESS

Step 1 - Prepare your sharpening stone

As you already know, that may look different depending on what type of stone you are using.

Step 2 – Sharpen the outer bevel

Rest the back of the gouge on your sharpening stone, and raise the handle until the outer bevel is lying flat on the stone. Move the blade back and forth, twisting as you go to sharpen evenly along the entire bevel. Be sure not to twist too much or you will round the corners of the blade. Continue this until you see a small metal burr (the small fold of metal that forms at the apex of the cutting edge during sharpening) on the inside edge of your gouge.



Watch Master Carver Joe Dillet's tutorial on sharpening with a double sided diamond stone:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apN0fbeQtvE>

Step 3 – Sharpen the inner bevel

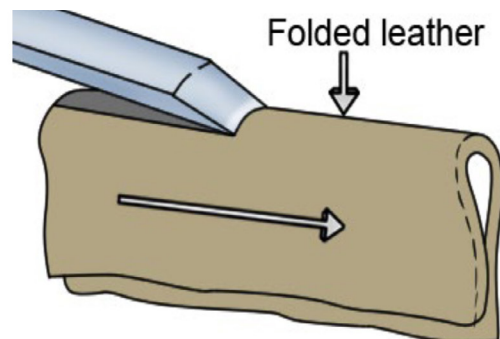
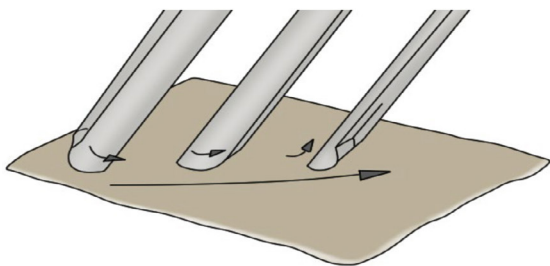
Use your slip stone to hone the inside of the blade (inner bevel). Holding the gouge firmly in one hand, move the slip stone up and down against the inside of the bevel. Continue until the burr has been pushed to the other side of the blade.



Repeat steps 2 and 3 until the burr has been reduced to nothing

Step 4 – Polish the gouge

Use your strop to remove any final burrs and polish your finished blade. Remember to strop both the inside and outside of the gouge.



TIPS AND SHARPENING STANDARDS

As you sharpen your gouges, remember these four sharpening standards from wood carving legend Chris Pye:

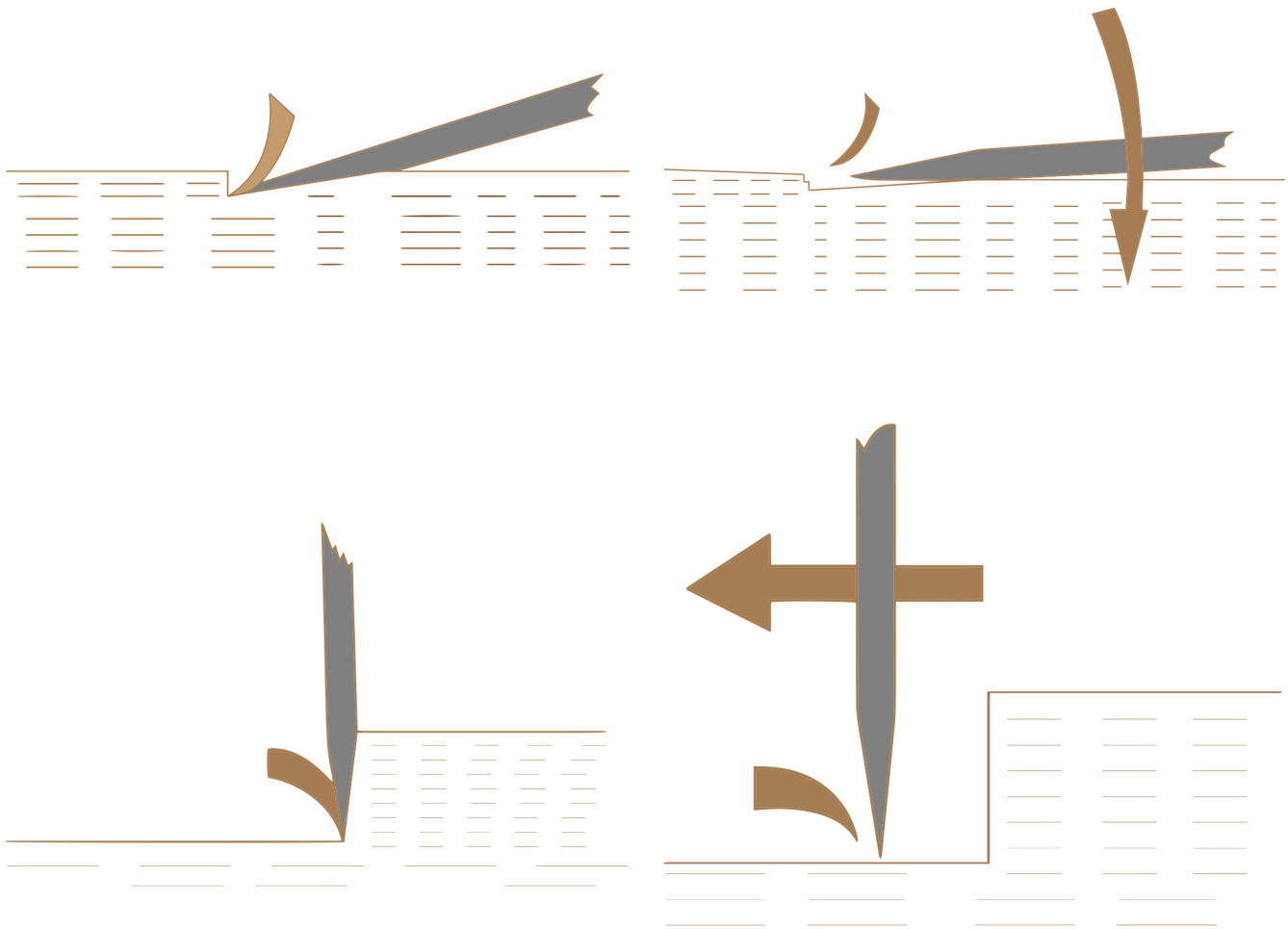
1. Cutting edges should be at right angles to the blade (unless sharpening a skew chisel)
2. Tools should have straight cutting edges
3. Sharpness should be maintained all the way to and including the edges' corners
4. Thickness should be even across the width of the carving blade

Another helpful trick to keep in mind:

A blunt edge can be seen reflecting light, and appears as a thick, shiny line. This line of light will be your guide to the state of your cutting edge. By always checking the distribution and thickness of the line, you'll be able to monitor the state of your blade. The thicker the line of light, the duller the edge, and vice versa. Once your edge is sharpened, your line of light will be gone. Make sure you strive for evenness as you sharpen.

CUTTING TECHNIQUE AND HOW YOU MAY BE DULLING YOUR BLADES TOO FAST

Poor carving technique can dull even the keenest tools. Prising chips of wood away or cutting and then scraping the blade edge across the wood are both common with beginners. Nip these practices in the bud early before they become habits, and save yourself a load of sharpening down the road.



SHARPENING RESOURCES

There are tons of resources that will teach you in depth how to sharpen your tools. We recommend checking out Mary May or friend of Schaaf Tools, Joe Dillett's sharpening tutorials on YouTube. Here's a link to Joe's channel:

 https://www.youtube.com/user/joedillett/videos?fbclid=IwAR3RovdslnZRnZruiS_OaqcnXpjfmaJYDBpZBAG6m217BDNom36vDQEXbIA



Sharpen a V-tool

TIPS FOR TAKING CARE OF YOUR TOOLS

- After every use, clean and dry your tools and replace their protective caps
- If rust appears, remove immediately with fine grit emery cloth
- Keep your Schaaf Tools Carving set stored in the provided canvas tool roll, or in a separate carving box.
*****However, if you leave your tools unused in a tool roll for a couple months at a time, and the air is humid, they will rust*****
- Ideally, try to avoid storing your tools in a moist environment to avoid rust. If humidity is a problem where you live, think about storing your tools in an air conditioned room or using a dehumidifier. Otherwise, make sure to be vigilant about cleaning your tools.
- You can wipe your tools down with oil (any oil...olive, camellia, mineral oil or even some type of silicone lubricant) to protect the metal.



Don't forget to subscribe on our website for discounts, giveaways and updates!

<https://www.schaaftools.com/>



Sources

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THANK YOU

TO THE WOODCARVERS

THAT TOOK TIME TO HELP

INFORM THIS EBOOK.