



March 2014



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It has been a very satisfying month for me. The reception of my new bowl gouge has been unbelievable. I will have Doug making another run, soon. For those that have it already, I'd love some feedback!

A woman went to the doctor's office where she was seen by one of the younger doctors. After about four minutes in the examination room, she burst out screaming as she ran down the hall. An older doctor stopped her and asked what the problem was, and she told him her story.

After listening, he had her sit down and relax in another room. The older doctor marched down the hallway back to where the young doctor was writing on his clipboard.

"What the hell is the matter with you?!" the older doctor demanded. "Mrs. Terry is 71 years old, has four grown children and seven grandchildren, and you told her she was pregnant?"

The younger doctor continued writing and without looking up said, "Does she still have the hiccups?"

Anonymous

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TIPS & TECHNIQUES

Topic of the Month: Chucks

I have written often about chucking methods. This past month I spoke with two previous students about chucks and was trouble shooting some obstacles. I found they both chose to use a chuck to turn hollow forms. As you probably already know I do not use chucks at all. Chucks have limitations and I want to open up possibilities not limit them. Chucks are good tools and it is not that the chuck fails but it is grabbing a sponge. The wood fibers compress and will not be as strong of a holding method as a faceplate. If you choose to use a chuck, you have to live with the limitations. Some turners find ways around or find a fix for the obstacle but I would rather prevent the problem rather than finding a fix. The fix often will lead to unintended consequence of other limitations.

Why do we use a chuck? What are the perceived advantages? Is it faster? I contend it takes me no longer to prepare a concave surface to use a faceplate. Do I save any wood? Yes, a small amount of waste wood is needed for the screws but used properly the chuck tendon is waste wood too, so the difference is maybe a half inch at most wasted by using screws and faceplate. One rule I have is to never let the chucking method influence the shape, size or transition to the foot. Having extra waste wood at the base of any turning will open up design possibilities. I know you don't want to waste ANY wood. Well, will you get over it, this stuff grows on trees. On bowls or small items a glue block process like I use in my Bowl DVD will waste almost no wood at all.

So what happens when we use a chuck? It is a stronger method to use a faceplate with lots of screws and a concave surface. This strength and stability will allow you to turn faster. You can take bigger cuts without vibration. You can turn bigger. The faceplate will allow you to turn taller hollow forms and larger bowls without vibration. One of the biggest weaknesses of a chuck is truing to hollow taller and taller pieces. The stress on a long tall vessel is greatest when we hollow out away from its support. A faceplate has more support so we can hollow out taller hollow forms without vibration. Some turners would solve this problem by using a steady rest. The steady rest causes its own problems and I don't want to have to deal with them. Again, I'd rather prevent the vibration then try to fix it.

Faceplates are a safer method. When was the last time you knocked a hollow form off a faceplate? Like never! Getting the speed of the lathe up higher makes for a cleaner, easier cut, and safety is a big issue. Safer, stronger, bigger, faster, easier...why would you want to limit your access or creativity by using a chuck? What is more fun? Creating possibilities, exploring shapes and designs is a lot more fun than fighting the limitations of a chuck.

With that said, a lot of famous turners use chucks exclusively, nothing else. We were taught by production turners. Production turners used chucks to get pieces on and off the lathe fast. Most of us are not trying to turn 30 bowls a day so there is no need for the methods that production turners use. We want to work on one turning at a time and enjoy the process. We want to make the best possible turned treasure one at a time, not multiples of the same thing day in and day out.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

SHARPENING THE PARABOLIC FLUTE BOWL GOUGE

Hi Lyle,

I read with interest about your new bowl gouge. It sounds great. I do have a question about sharpening it. I have One Way sharpening jig. Can the new parabolic bowl gouge be sharpened using the One Way jig?

Bill

Hi Bill from Georgia,

Yes, the new gouge is sharpened the same way as the old one: same jig, same angles, same set up, and same procedures. The nose shape on the new bowl gouge appears to be slightly more rounded when sharpened, and that is a good thing. That is what helps it to be friendlier and the control for the more forgiving sweet spot.

After using the new gouge for a few weeks now, I had a class situation where I went back to use one of the old tools (just because it was sharp) and I could really see the performance difference. I like the new tool...a lot!! Thank you Doug Thompson!

GRINDER SET UP MEASUREMENTS

Good Morning Lyle,

I have read in a number of spots to throw away the Wolverine jig instructions as they are incorrect. I am rather confused on setup. What are your grinder setup rules? Specifically what are the height of the center of the grinder axle to the bottom (or top) of the Wolverine jig? Are there rules for setup of the Vari-grind jig as well? Thank your assistance, it sure would be great if I could get my grinder setup correctly.

I love your videos.

Regards, Jerry

Hi Jerry and Cathy location unknown,

This is an important question. The use of the bowl gouge is dependent on getting the grinder to make the tip and side angles produce the grind you want. A picture is worth a thousand words. Please look at the YouTube clip and see if that answers your questions. <http://youtu.be/0zUph9zEjck> Yes, this is the opposite of the Wolverine instructions. I would say the Wolverine instructions are not totally wrong, but confusing and different.

To answer your questions in writing, the set up rules or dimensions were developed by and for the David Ellsworth jig. The Wolverine jig is adjustable, so the measurements are not as important anymore. A good starting point from the centerline of the grinder to the sliding arm basket position is 4 inches but this is not critical or needed. The jig adjustment can compensate for different measurements. The same for the jig set up. There is no one place to set it that works in all situations. Every grinder and grinder base will be different.

You need to decide what tip angle you want. I use 60-65 degrees. The tip angle is measurable and is set by moving the jig arm. The hard part is getting the wing or side angles correct. I like my side angles tilted in significantly but this is not measurable. You need to have one of my bowl gouges to use as a template to set your jig. The side angle will come close to my grind if you move the sliding arm so the basket position is 7 inches away from the grinding wheel face. If one of your local club members has my tool, borrow it and set your jig to match the angles.

Hope this helps. If the YouTube clip does not solve it for you, give me a call and I'll help you through it.

TOOL CATALOG

Do you have a free catalog?

If so, please mail me one.

Thanks,

Gary

Hi Gary and Debra from Wisconsin,
Thanks for your interest. I do not print a catalog. Go to my web site "store" menu, it is an on-line catalog. There is additional information about the tools in the tool menu. Give me a call or let me know if you have any other questions. There are lots of resources I have for you, all free, newsletter, YouTube clips, DVDs, and articles, and I'm just as far away as your phone.

PREPARING A BURL TO TURN

Hi Lyle, I just got this fresh cut cherry burl. It looks like the burl goes a little more than half the way around the tree. I was planning on doing a chain saw cut right down the pith as you discussed in your December 2012 newsletter. Is it OK to turn this wet? Do you have any other suggestions?

Greg



Hi Greg, From Wisconsin,

Nice find! Yes, I would turn it wet to a final wall thickness. A tree or burl that size will crack if left too long to dry in a solid block.

Before you make any cuts you have to make some decisions. The more planning you do the luckier you will be. First, do you want to make a bowl or hollow form? Next decision is axis or orientation. Is the top of the vessel toward the bark or toward the pith? The size and type of the vessel you choose will help you make the first chain saw cut. Think about getting the best piece out of this burl not the biggest. You might get two spectacular pieces instead of one mediocre piece.

The first chain saw cut will give you information needed to make the second cut. The color and character of the burl will go into the tree not just the cap of the burl. The first cuts would be to cut the trunk off each side close to the burl. Of course, do not do this until you are ready to turn. Store it as is to prevent the drying from damaging the burl. If the burl is big enough to get more than one vessel my next chain saw cut would be parallel to the tree and right through the pith cutting the burl in half. This will be a very revealing cut to see if the middle is solid and where the color is in the tree trunk area. Some burls are rotten or punky in the center with radiating cracks which you need to stay away from. If the burl is only big enough to get one vessel my next chain saw cut would be parallel to the tree but this time separating the burl from the straight grain area of the tree, again down the pith. Use the lathe now as a planning aid. Put the piece between centers and adjust the axis to get the intended shape you want and see where the rim will be all visually. Look and measure the height and diameter as best as you can before you make any cuts on the lathe. This is guess work at this stage

but will help you decide to make another chain saw cut...or not. This is fun! Take your time to think it through; this is no time to get in a rush. Enjoy the planning process.

SANDING CHERRY VS. MAPLE TO AVOID CRACKING

Hi Lyle,

Just a quick question, I have turned a number of fairly successful maple bowls (successful in they did not crack later) and now have a couple in cherry. The first cherry bowl I treated like the maple, turned thin 1/8-3/16", sanded hard and hot, applied paste wax with my hands creating lots of heat trying to bake the wax into the wood. Like I said, the maple seems to like it and warps nicely upon drying without cracking but the first cherry piece has cracked at the rim on both sides at center of tree. The cracks are small and repairable. I did remove all of the pith. The second attempt I left it a little thicker unfortunately included more wood closer to the pith generated less heat in sanding and zero heat in waxing and has stored it in a grocery bag for now.

Is cherry more susceptible to cracking than maple? Should I perhaps leave the turned bowl outside for a few days to dry more slowly? Simple thoughts?

Dietrich

Hi Dietrich from Michigan

I'll outline some things to watch for. If you can send me some photos it would help me see what is going on. There should be very little difference in the process used for maple and cherry. They have different color and grain character but the working characteristics are similar. Make sure there is no cracks in the log before you start. Waste a little away from the pith. The drying stresses are greater the closer you get to the pith. Make a slightly shallower bowl and get an inch or so away from the pith and your success rate will dramatically increase. Make sure the bowl is uniform thickness from rim to bottom.

I really disagree with your sanding philosophy. I never want to sand "HOT". The heat can start heat checks that can start a crack. Hot sandpaper is not sharp sandpaper, and you want to sand sloooooowly to prevent heat buildup. If the sandpaper is hot what is happening to the wood? Nothing good! The heat will do more than speed up the drying process. Wait a little while and give the finished bowl a chance to dry out on its own before sanding. Don't force the sanding too soon. If the sandpaper clogs up wait longer so the surface of the wood is dry enough to sand.

CARBIDE CUTTER TOOL CONTROL IN BULBOUS SHAPES

Lyle,

Got the carbide cutter Friday night and couldn't play with it until today. Really nice finish on the inside! More importantly, the piece is missing the cracks. Dry wood mounted on face grain. With the carbide cutter and a little patience with the learning curve, I was able to get a uniform 1/8" all the way to the outside edges (they're actually 3/16" but close enough for me). I cheated a little with a larger opening (2" instead of 1.25") and the top is a little more angled than the first one which was almost flat. I'm ok with the results for now.

The hard part for me was where the inside bottom edge meets the inside top edge. Kind of like cutting a bead. I had to come at it from both directions and meet at the edge. Hard to get rid of the tool marks at the edge but the rest of the inside is incredibly smooth.

Attached are pictures of the work. No finish or finial yet but hollowing is the interesting part for me. I'll send you one or two of the final product for your newsletter when I'm done.

Thanks again,
Steve



Hi Steve from Michigan,

Hopefully the cracking issue is solved. The inside shape is easier with the HSS cutter for beginners. The carbide takes some time to master the flow of some shapes. Get the process down with the HSS first and get some tool control experience before jumping to the carbide. The carbide works much better for most things but when you get confined in the kind of shape you have there the area at the largest diameter can be a little tricky. It will always work better cutting to the left, even when in scraping mode. At the largest diameter of the piece use fingertip control and sweep the shape in a light scooping motion. Transition the shape from low side wall to the midpoint and up the wall some in the upper wall. Enter a cut lightly and exit the cut lightly so there is not a tool mark at the start and stop of each cut.

PREPARING AND STORAGE OF DOUBLE TURNED BOWLS

Lyle,

I have watched your DVD Bowl Basics and know you usually don't double turn your bowls. So far I have made 4 bowls out of wild cherry with a high moisture content and 2 of them have cracked. I have been putting Anchorseal on the end grain of each bowl plus wrapping each bowl in newspaper as well as putting it in a paper grocery bag. I always cut out the pith and use the 10% rule. I have stored each bag in our basement which is heated. Would it be better to store the green bowls in our unheated garage? I live in Michigan and it has been real cold lately. Is a 50% bowl crack rate acceptable or usual? The hygrometer in our basement reads 40%. I am new to bowl turning and any help or suggestions I could try would be appreciated.

John

Hi John from Michigan

If I understand your question you are double turning, correct? I don't double turn because I don't like to wait six months to a year and I don't like the cracking losses. However, 50 percent is more loss than you should get.

Your process and storage seems to be right on. We need to slow the drying process not stop it. What you are doing should work. Storing outside will not work in the Michigan winter. It will just be frozen and not dry out for you.

What is going wrong than? My first guess is that the cracks are already in the wood before you started. You must waste away both ends of each bowl blank to insure you have solid fresh wood to start. As you rough out the blank take a really clean pass and inspect it for cracks with a bright light. Another important item is to turn to a uniform thickness. If there are thinner and thicker areas the drying time is not equal. Uniformity is the key, top to bottom. In fact you can cheat a little and make the bottom a little thinner than the rim of the bowl. Say the rim is 1 inch thick, the bottom can be 3/4 inch thick. This is another reason to use a glue block chucking method. A chuck and/or a faceplate with screws will leave the bottom thicker than the rim...not good for drying stresses.

REPLACING WOOD HANDLES ON THE NEW BOWL GOUGE

Lyle,

I am interested in your new parabolic fluted bowl gouge. I have a bunch of "spent" gouges-not sure how I unhandle them and rehandle. Is it something I can do?

Gretch

Hi Gretch from Michigan,

I have put new gouges in old handles many, many times. I take a piece of 2x6 and cut a notch in the end 3/4 inch wide by 2 inches long. Put the old gouge in a vice holding the tool. Slip the 2x6 notch over the gouge and pound the handle off with a large hammer. So they go on and off with a friction fit, really tight fit, so you have to hit it pretty hard but it will come off.

Then put a block of wood on the floor, put the new gouge grind down, tang up, on the block. Put the old handle on the tang and, with another waste block, hammer the handle on the tool. I use the waste blocks to prevent any damage to the handle with the hammer blows. The new gouge tang is 5/8 inch diameter all the way, not tapered. Hit it hard with multiple blows to seat it all the way into the handle, about two inches.

After the old handle has been used for many bowl gouges the hole can get sloppy. If it is not a good fit, I use super glue to hold the new gouge in the old handle.

FEEDBACK

Hi Lyle,

Just wanted to let you know that I greatly enjoyed your class this weekend. I learned so many things. I will definitely be telling the beginners in our club to watch your DVD. The way you showed me the cuts has taken a lot of the question out of it. I went in my shop today and did some practice cuts. Will definitely be doing more of that! You showed me that I don't always have to complete a project when I turn.

Thanks for the great weekend. I look forward to doing it again sometime.

Regards,

John from Michigan

About roughing out a bowl blank, very clear and helpful to be able to use a gouge, thanks for this valuable advice.

Alain, From France on YouTube

Hi Lyle,

Firstly may I say that I received your Bowl Basics DVD's and they are absolutely fantastic. The information contained is excellent and as a beginner have shown me how things really should be done, the easy way.

Thanks,

James from England

CALENDAR

Check out my website calendar for more specifics.

(<http://www.lylejamieson.com/information/calendar.asp>)

March, 2014 – New York

August, 2014 – Illinois, Texas

April, 2014 – Georgia

September, 2014 – Virginia

June, 2014 - Arizona