

The Little Book of *Whittling*



Easy Projects You Can Make in a Weekend

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Whittling for beginners

I was given a whittling knife a few years ago by my sister, as a gift for being her bridesmaid. (She knows me well!) It comes with me on every camping trip and I love trying to work with the different wood types that might be lying around. I certainly don't claim to be a 'whittler' and I've yet to create anything worth mentioning, (mostly spears to catch the cowboys with and the odd spoon here and there!) but I really enjoy having the tools to be creative in the outdoors when I have a bit of time on my hands.

Fancy trying your hand at this traditional craft? You'll find all you need to know to get started in our beginner's guide to whittling.



Whittling with pocket knives

Before I got my whittling knife I used my pocket knife, which, so long as it was sharp, did a great job. Throughout whittling history, whittlers used pocket knives and some still choose them over specialised whittling knives. For me, the main benefit is that they are so portable. I always have my pocket knife on me during outdoor trips, so it's nice to know that if the opportunity or need arises for some impromptu creativity, I'm covered. I also like that you can switch between the different blade sizes, depending on your need.

Using your pocket knife is a great way to try out whittling without investing in a 'proper' whittling knife. If you're just beginning whittling then having a blade that has the ability to lock is something to consider. A non-locking blade can be unstable and tricky to work with, and the potential for lost fingers is also higher than with a locking knife.

If you're in the market for a pocket knife anyway, then these Victorinox pocket knives will also suit your whittling needs:

Sentinel Swiss Army Knife

A super simple pocket knife, the Sentinel offers a slim and lightweight design with one lockable blade.



EvoGrip S18 Swiss Army Knife

A great multi-tool with an ergonomic handle for good grip. The EvoGrip has 11 implements with 15 different functions and a locking blade.



The best whittling knives for beginners

Knives that are designed specifically for whittling tend to be non-folding knives, so are a little less convenient for on the go wood carving. However, their fixed blade makes them more sturdy and their handles sit much more comfortably in the hand than pocket knives. That said, there are also some really excellent folding knives that are ideal for whittling, and some pocket

knives that are specifically designed as whittling knives.

There are a ton of specialist whittling knife options out there and many whittlers have multiple knives for different jobs. Here are some of the best whittling knives out there, that are also ideal for beginner whittlers.



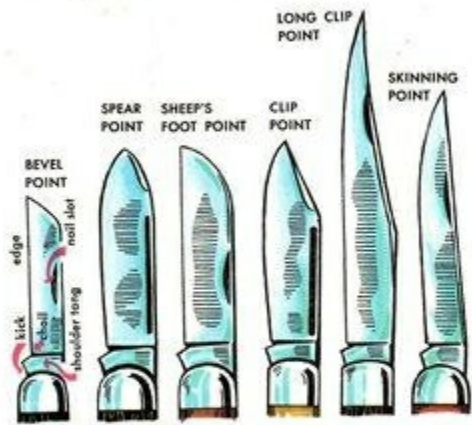
Morakniv 106

This all-purpose whittling knife is a really excellent choice as a first whittling knife that you won't need to upgrade, perhaps ever! It has a limited lifetime warranty and the durable laminated steel blade will see you through many many happy years of whittling.

Although the Mora 106 will tackle most projects with no problem, the 3.2 inch blade makes this whittling knife one of the longer knives around and less well suited to intricate and detailed projects. And as your whittling projects get more ambitious, you may want to add the shorter (2.4 inch blade) Mora 120 to your tool kit.

Some whittlers prefer a more ergonomic handle like the Opinel, but the oiled Birchwood handle of Mora knives feels wonderfully at home in your palm. The finish is smooth but provides plenty of grip and control when tackling big rough cuts as well as more detailed work.

Your Knife and How To Use It



A KNIFE is the camper's best friend. It's used time and time again during each camping day—for whittling a peg, for cutting a rope, for trimming a branch, for cleaning a trout, and for many other things.

A knife deserves the best of care. Keep it sharp, wipe it off after each use to prevent it from rusting or staining, and treat the joints to an occasional drop of machine oil so that the blades will keep opening easily.

For allaround use, the Boy Scout knife is the best. For certain purposes, however, you may need a special knife, such as a whittler's knife, a fisherman's knife, or a hunting knife.



JACKKNIFE HAS BLADES AT ONE END ONLY, PEN-KNIFE AT BOTH ENDS.

PASS OPEN KNIFE TO SOMEONE ELSE HANDLE FIRST.



SHEATH KNIFE OR HUNTING KNIFE IS DESIGNED FOR HEAVY DUTY.

SHARPEN KNIFE BLADE AGAINST THE EDGE, AS IF CUTTING INTO SHARPENING STONE. KEEP BACK OF BLADE $\frac{1}{8}$ " ABOVE STONE. TURN BLADE AFTER EACH STROKE.

Protective gear for beginner whittling

Now because it's essential that your knife is VERY sharp, it's a good idea to have some protective gear. Keeping hold of all your fingers should be your first line of defence against the power of the blade. But I have also heard horror stories of gashed thighs from slip ups with sharp whittling tools. Who knew it could be such a risky pastime?! So if you're worried about severing an artery in your leg then place something like a thick piece of leather or a wooden board on your lap. And to protect your fingers from losing their tips you might want to consider these options:

Carving thumb guard

It's a good idea to wear a thumb guard when you are using the pull stroke to add detail to your project.



Cut resistant kevlar gloves

Kevlar gloves can be better than leather gloves as they provide a great degree of dexterity.



A few more safety tips for beginner whittling:

Go slow, never make a big cut of any kind, but work into the cut slowly and gradually.

Keep your knife sharp. This may sound counterintuitive for the safety of your fingers, but blunt knives are much more likely to skip across the wood instead of into it, and even dull knives can cut human flesh.

How to Whittle

Now that you're set up with a VERY SHARP KNIFE, and some protective gear, it's time to get making some easy wood carving projects. First up you'll need to learn a few basic strokes.

Straightaway rough cutting

Straightaway rough cut Use this cut to get a basic outline for your project. Make long sweeping cuts with the grain that go away from your body. Don't be tempted to cut too deeply, just gradually remove the wood you don't want.



The push stroke (thumb push)

Whittling thumb push stroke This stroke is used when you want to start shaping your project. You have a high level of control over the knife, which you push away from you. The thumb of your non-cutting hand provides the power to push on the back of the knife or thumb of your cutting hand. The cutting hand then steers the knife to create small and smooth cuts.



The pull stroke (paring cut)

Whittling pull cut Used in a similar way to the push stroke – for control and detail. Draw the knife towards you, with the grain, with the thumb of your cutting hand acting as a clamp at the end of the wood. With some pull strokes the thumb will stop the knife so this is a good time to wear a thumb guard.



Concluding Thoughts

Whittling isn't for everyone, some people enjoy other woodcarving techniques that are more advanced and artist which you can find at

But this inexpensive alternative is where most people who are interested in wood carving start. Having the tools to start carving isn't enough though, using the provided safety measures and getting hand safety equipment helps protect you from any potential accidents. Eventually, you'll be able to branch out to other types of wood and even be able to make something from wood found on the ground!

Whittled Christmas Trees



You will need:

- Whittling knife
- Saw
- Paint for decoration (optional)
- Branch, diameter 3-4 cm (1.25 - 1.5 in) or dry lime wood (basswood) 1 x 3 cm (0.5 x 1.25 in)

Step 1: Basic Whittling Technique

1. Hold the wood with one hand and the knife with the other.
2. Make sweeping cuts away from you along the grain of the wood - this is a good technique for long cuts. You won't always have the knife completely under control when using this technique, so take care.
3. Whilst sitting, splay your legs or bend them to one side so you don't cut into them.
4. Lean the knife slightly sideways; this gives you the best cutting technique.



Step 2: The Thumb Push Technique

1. This technique is suitable for detailed and controlled wood carving.
2. Press the thumb of the hand holding the wood against the blunt side of the blade to push and guide the knife forwards.
3. At the same time, move the knife slightly up and down. Your thumb may get sore to start with, so stick a plaster over it first!
4. This technique is used for cutting into wood or if you need to make a groove. Don't forget to turn the work when necessary so you're always whittling away from your body.



Step 3: How to Make Your Fir Tree



1. Whittle a point, then narrow two opposite sides for the grooves. You can use an axe to roughly shape your tree first.
2. Carve grooves along the edges - take care the tips don't break off.
3. Saw the finished tree to the correct length.
4. You can paint or decorate your tree if desired.

Step 4: Small Trees Make Great Gift Tags!



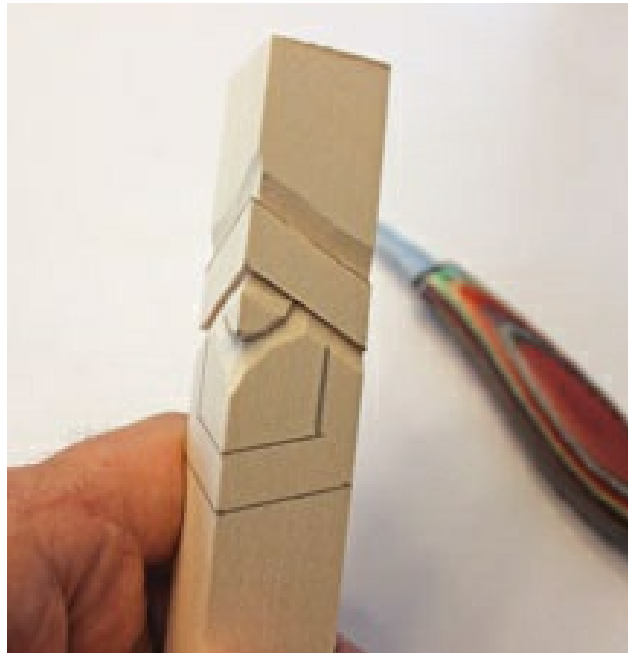
1. Drill a small hole in the tip of your tree.
2. Loop a piece of string or ribbon through the hole and attach to your gifts.

Carving A Simple Santa Ornament

Getting Started

Refer to the attached drawings to measure and mark the blank. Connect the marks as shown in the drawings.

Step 1: Make stop cuts along the top and bottom of the hat trim. Work around the front right and front left sides of the trim. Then, make a stop cut around the nose. Carve up to the stop cuts



Step 2: Round the left and right corners of the hat trim. Start slimming down the hat.



Step 3: Reconnect the pencil lines that you carved off around the hat trim. Make new stop cuts along these lines, and then carve up and down to them on the back right and left sides. Round the back of the hat trim to help round the head.



Step 4: Round the top and bottom edges of the hat trim. Finish rounding the hat and nose.



Step 5: Make stop cuts along the outer edges of the beard. Follow the lines.



Step 6: Carve both shoulders down slightly below the beard where they meet

the hat. Make stop cuts under the forearms and carve up to them. Round all four corners of the robe.



Step 7: Make stop cuts along the upper forearms. Carve down the beard area between the arms. Use the reference photos to draw the mouth, mustache, gloves, the area where the inner and outer robes meet, and the backs of the arms.



Step 8: Make stop cuts on the lines you drew in Step 7. Carve to the stop cuts to outline the the mouth, mustache, gloves, and backs of the arms. Carve towards the stop cuts on the robes from the inner robe towards the outer robe. Make a small V-cut at the inner elbows on both arms where the upper and lower arms meet. Round the sharp edges.



Step 9: Add the beard and mustache texture. Use a 1/8" (3mm) V-tool.



Painting the Santa

Paint the lighter colors before you do the darker colors. I painted this piece with acrylic paints thinned with water to the consistency of milk. Paint several layers if you want deeper colors. When the paint is dry, seal the carving with a coat of Deft semi-gloss spray lacquer. Spray combustible finishes, such as spray lacquer, outside where there is plenty of ventilation.

Materials:

- Basswood, 1" (2.5cm) square: 6" (15.2cm)
- Acrylic paint: red, white, black, green, medium flesh, parchment

- Finish, semi-gloss spray lacquer, such as Deft

Tools:

- Carving knife
- V-tool: 1/8" (3mm)
- Toothpick
- Paintbrushes
- Pencil
- Ruler

Comfort Birdie to Fly



Supplies:

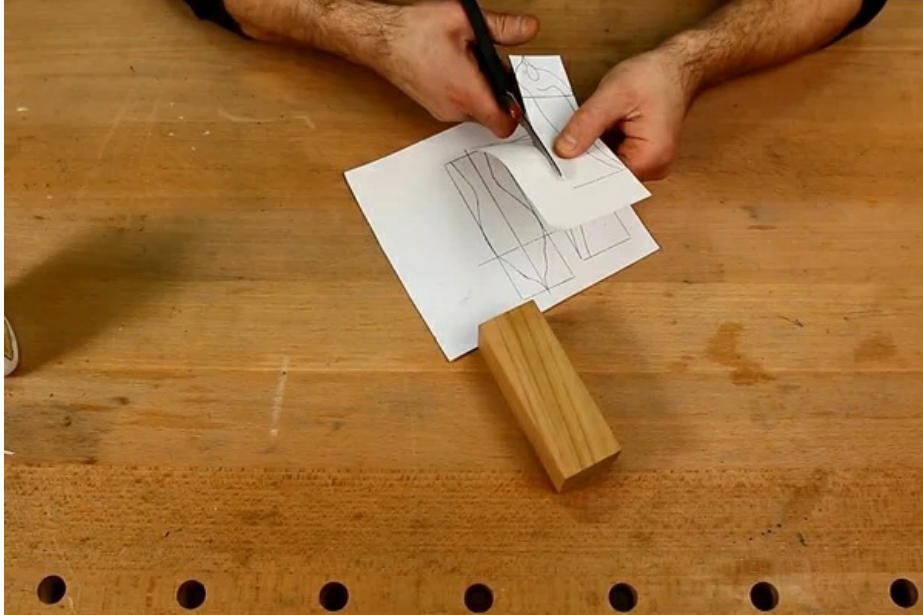
You'll need:

- some wood, better take basswood, it's easy to work with. 4.9" x 1.6" would work well
- a knife (you can take a pocket knife, but it's better to get a good whittling knife)
- beeswax
- sand paper
- bird pattern
- glue

Or you can get all in one kit, I know BeaverCraft does that, they provide all you need for bird carving in one box. It's for those lazy people as I am not to

worry about finding all the supplies.

Step 1: Cut Out Three Bird Patterns



You can draw them yourself, it's easy, just make sure to draw symmetrical lines.

Or you can get patterns in the starter carving kit from BeaverCraft.

It should be four sides, up, down, left and right one.

Better not to give this task to kids, otherwise, the result could be a bit funny but not practical. It was my mistake at first.

Step 2: Glue the Pattern to Wood



Now all we need to do it's to glue the pattern to wood.

We took cheery for this bird project, as it has beautiful coloring after finish, but if you never tried carving before or did that just for a few times, then it's better to practice first on basswood.



Step 3: Cut Wood Following the Lines



You don't need special techniques for this. Just make sure to follow the lines.

In a few minutes, your hands will be helping you out to work in the right positions.

Although if you're too afraid, then BeaverCraft has a detailed tutorial in a kit that can help you out.



Step 4: As a Passing Result You Should Get Such Bird



Take a minute for some rest and look at your bird.

There is some work to do, although it's already getting some nice look.

Step 5: Again Whittling Time, Carve Along the Lines



This time we work on the shape of the bird.

It's ok to give your kid a knife to proceed with carving. But wood carving is recommended for kids 12+ years old.



Step 6: Wood Carving Is Finished at This Point



Finish line. We are done with carving part. It's time to proceed to the next step.

Step 7: Now We're Going to Sand the Bird With 150 Grit Sandpaper



In order to remove all the rough sides. This will make the bird prepared for the flight

Step 8: After That Take 220&320 Grit Sandpaper



Step 9: Finish It With the Beeswax



Beeswax works the best for good finish.

Step 10: Finally. We Have a Birdie Ready to Fly

In the end you'll have such birdie on your table. While it could have a different coloring if you went with basswood instead of cherry which is highly recommended at the beginner stage.

How to Make a Sumac Pocket Whistle



Materials

- straight branch of staghorn sumac (or any other wood with a soft pith, such as willow), 3-4" long with a 1/2" diameter
- a few twigs, stripped of bark, with a 1/4" diameter

Tools

- hand pruners
- hacksaw
- small, sharp knife
- drill
- 1/4" drill bit
- Safety

Since this Instructable deals with power tools and knives, work with caution and wear safety equipment when necessary.

Step 1: Hollowing Out the Sumac



Using the pith in the middle of the sumac as a guide, drill a hole lengthwise through the sumac using the 1/4" bit.

Keep the RPM of the drill high while you are drilling, but don't apply too much pressure. Take your time to decrease the chance of splitting. Be sure to keep the bit in the middle of the sumac as best you can. If the bit is shorter than the sumac, drill from one side and then the other.

Step 2: Stripping the Bark Off the Sumac



Strip all the bark off of the sumac until you reach the wood. If the sumac is fresh, there will be a thin green layer coating the wood, which can be easily scraped off with a knife, or even one's fingernails.

Using fresh sumac is the easiest when it comes to stripping bark.

Step 3: Cutting the Notch, Part 1



Using a hacksaw, cut halfway through the sumac. This cut should be made half an inch from one of the ends.

Saw slowly to keep the cut clean, straight, and precise.

Step 4: Cutting the Notch, Part 2



Measure half an inch from the hacksaw cut and mark this point with a pencil. Using a knife, slice out a notch from this point towards the hacksaw cut. The angle should be anywhere from 35° to 45° .

Cut carefully, making sure not to slice past the cut made with the hacksaw.

Step 5: Making the First Plug



Cut one of the twigs to 3/8" in length.

Cutting down this plug to be the right diameter will take some patience and a few tries. This plug should fit very snugly in the end of the sumac opposite the end with the notch.

Be very careful when cutting the plug to the right diameter. Cutting such a small object requires caution, precision, and a very sharp knife (my knife of choice for this project was the Buck 102 Woodsman).

Step 6: Making the Second Plug



Follow the same procedure as the previous step to create the second plug, but make sure this one fits snugly into the opposite end of the sumac (the end with the notch).

Once you have a replica of the first plug you made, slice 2/5 off of the plug, lengthwise. This will create a small slot for air to travel through when the plug is inserted and air is blown through the notched end.

Step 7: Inserting the Plugs

Carve down the notched end of the whistle to create a more comfortable mouthpiece.

I kept this whistle simple by only carving down the other end and carving a ring around it.

Feel free to personalize this whistle by carving patterns, which, unless they are carved too deep, will not affect the functionality of the whistle.

Experiment by using different sizes of mouthpiece plugs and different overall lengths of the whistle in order to adjust the tone and pitch.

If you make this whistle, please let me know in the "I Made It" section. I'd love to see what you make! If you have any suggestions, please let me know in the comments.

Thanks for following along through this Instructable. I hope you were able to create this whistle with little difficulty.

Carved Viking Chess Piece

Step 1: Tools Needed

Tools Needed

You only need a saw and a knife to make this pieces.

A small whittling knife or a chip knife is the best suited for the carving. But any small sharp knife will do the job. And a bigger knife is needed to split the wood into the 4 pieces needed.

I use my hand forged knives and a pull saw.

If you don't have a suitable knife already I recoment you buy a pfeil or a flexcut I have used both brands and they a both very good. And they are available many places online.

Step 2: Preparing and Splitting the Wood



Cut a length of green wood. I use a branch of hassle I have just cut down a few days ago. When you use green wood the carving is much easier because the wood is softer.

You can use any kind of green wood. I can recommend alder, hassle and willow for beginners. They are easy to come by, they are soft and grow straight, and therefore are easy to carve.

For the more skilled and experienced you can go for the harder kinds of wood like black cherry, apple, mayflower or maple. Or yew if you can get your hands on some.

Yew and alder are even soft and easily carved after they dry and the wood have cured.

Step 3: The Rough Cuts



Step 4: The Fine Cuts



In the last steps I smoothed out the square impression and ad details like eyes and mouth.

Step 5: More Inspiration



Here are some other carvings I have made using similar technique.

I hope you enjoyed this instructable. Feel free to write me with comments and questions.

Carving a Eagle Feather



Step 1: Items Needed

1. Piece of wood about 14x3x3/8. I used a slat of a pallet but any soft wood will be fine.
2. Pattern. I included one for you to use.
3. Bandsaw or coping saw
4. knife, V-tool needed and a gouge would be helpful.
5. Sandpaper.
6. Paints and brushes.

Step 2: Draw Pattern and Cut Out



Sand the wood fairly smooth and trace the pattern onto the wood then cut out. I used a band saw to do this. The band saw saves time but you can always use

a coping saw for this. Then draw in the rest of the pattern lines with a pencil.

Step 3: Thin and Round Off Feather



Before you begin, ALWAYS use caution and never cut towards any body part including your hands, it is a good idea to use a carving glove. Plus, always cut with the grain of the wood, if you are cutting and the wood starts tearing you are going the wrong direction and need to cut from the other way.

Use V-tool to make stop cut along quill on both sides, you want to go deep enough to make quill stand out good. I will take a few passes probably to get to the depth you want. Don't try and do it all with one pass, as it is harder to control when pushing down hard and unsafe. After the stop cut is done take knife or gouge and remove excess wood from the feather on both sides of the quill. Next you will want to round the feather off from quill to edge of feather.

Step 4: Shape and Round Head

Use V-tool to make stop cuts along the beak, back of the head and the line above the eye. I like to take my knife a cut the round shape of the eye, then remove the wood around the circle of the eye so it protrudes a little. Now round the eye off. Start rounding the edges of the head and beak. Then cut up to the stop cuts on the beak.



You will be removing the wood from the beak so it is deeper down than the head. The lower beak needs to be deeper than the upper beak. Round off all hard edges along the beak and top of eye. I also make sure there are no saw marks anywhere on the carving. Use a knife or gouge to remove these.



Step 5: Smooth Feather Up

Make sure feather is rounded down nicely, then take a knife and round off the quill and put a good taper on the end of it. I like to sand the feather a little to smooth it up a bit, especially the quill itself. The rest of the feather not as important but I still hit it a little. The head I don't sand, but that is up to you.



Step 6: Adding ALOT of Lines

I like to take my v-tool and cut the first lines that go out the ruffles in the feather, that way the angles are somewhat the same. Then start continuing with the rest of the lines.

Step 7: Painting



I use acrylic paints. The brown i had water down a lot. it was very runny because i didn't want it dark brown. The white i also diluted but not as much as the brown. The yellow was even less, maybe 50/50 with water. the black i used undiluted and just took a toothpick to put a spot on it.

