

Whittling Technique Guide

Learning Whittling Through These Simple Patterns



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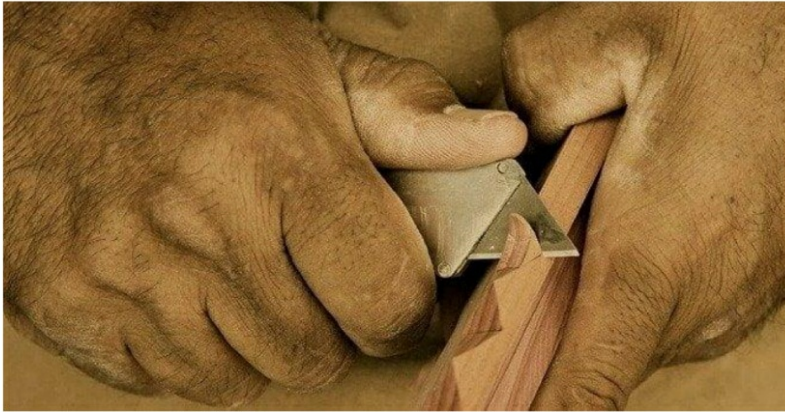
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What is Whittling?



Whittling is not a new hobby. It has been around since man first developed sharpening tools many thousands of years ago. Whittling is simply shaving a piece of wood with a carving knife to get a particular design. It can be a face, a shape or anything in between. There is no general rule when it comes to whittling. All you need to whittle is a piece of softwood and a high-quality knife with blades made from tempered steel for the best result. Additionally, a sharpening stone for whittling is also recommended.

Whittling is a little bit different compared to wood carving as it is easier and requires almost no skill at all. It also has a more rugged finish, which makes it look very artisanal. Any newbie can start whittling in a matter of minutes. Of course, there are some guidelines and techniques that you need to familiarize yourself to get the most out of your whittling project ideas.

What Beginners Should Know About Wood Whittling?



Before starting to whittle, there are some important factors to take into consideration. This will make your whittling project ideas easier to accomplish and more enjoyable.

Types of Wood: When whittling, it is recommended to use only soft wood. They are more malleable and can easily be carved with little effort. Soft wood like butternut and basswood are a pleasure to whittle with. Hardwood like white oak and even Mahogany should be avoided if you value your hand.

Knife: Additionally, the knife used is also very important. The best whittling knife provides a sharp hardened steel blade with a large and comfortable handle. The handle is usually made from resin and has an ergonomic shape to fit well in the hand. This helps limit hand fatigue and allow you to whittle for longer periods of time.

Project Type: If you are a beginner, start with easy projects. Most whittling books for beginners have easy to accomplish projects that will get you started right away.

Best Knife for 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.

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.



Opinel Carbon Blade No8

The **Opinel No8** is one outstandingly great value knife. It is not designed as a specialist whittling knife, but its properties are such that its wood carving performance is comparable to other whittling specific knives like the Mora 106. The 3.25 inch carbon steel blade is, like the Mora 106, a little on the long side for intricate projects. But it is highly durable with excellent cutting quality.

What makes this whittling knife an appealing option for beginner whittlers is its versatility. The foldable blade makes it is more portable than the Mora whittling knives, and therefore immediately allows you to use it in a variety of camping and hunting scenarios. When the blade is open it locks very securely with a Virobloc safety ring. This also locks the blade when it is closed to prevent it from coming open in your pocket. The ergonomic Beechwood handle is also very comfortable to use, even for those with big hands!



Morakniv Wood Junior

If you're keen to get your little 'uns whittling away with you, then the **Morakniv Wood Junior** is an ideal first knife. With a 3 inch blade and a small oiled Birchwood handle, the knife is a more compact version of the Mora 106. But what makes the Junior such a good option for young whittlers or those less confident handling sharp things, is the finger protection guard at the base of the blade.

The Junior is by no means a lesser knife than its more mature cousins and shouldn't be handled with any less caution – this is a very sharp knife that cuts through wood with the same strength

and precision as any of the other whittling knives in this review. And it goes without saying that budding whittlers will still need supervision when using this knife.



Beginner Palm and Knife Set

For newbie whittlers looking to leap right into the world of wood carving mania, this Flexcut Beginner Palm and Knife Set is THE place to start. Although it may be a little more pricey than other starter sets on the market, it is well worth paying the extra for the high quality hard carbon steel blades that won't pack up on you after a year of use. The set includes:

- 1 all-purpose cutting knife
- 1 detail knife for close work

- 1 sweep knife (palm tool) for small projects
- 1 V tool (palm tool) for small projects

Made in the USA, the set comes with a tool roll to store the knives in when not in use, and are razor-sharp and ready to use right out of the package. And as some of the most popular whittling knives offered by Flexcut, this beginner set will last you well into your whittling career making it suitable for more advanced whittlers too.



Flexcut Whittlin' Jack

Another excellent knife from Flexcut, the **Whittlin' Jack** combines the precise cutting quality of a fixed single blade whittling knife with the convenience and versatility of a pocket knife. AND they've added in a second blade into the bargain making this a superb option for whittling on the go. The high carbon steel blades are both on the short side compared with the Opinel: the detail knife is 1.5 inches long, and the roughing knife only slightly longer at 2 inches. Flexcut have selected the two most useful blades from the larger, more complex **Carvin' Jack** that features 6 blades.

Where the Whittlin' Jack falls short compared with the Opinel is the lack of locking mechanism on the blades. For more experienced whittlers this is no problem at all, and the small blades on this knife are more suited to advanced whittling anyway. But beginner whittlers may want to steer clear of this range of knives as their first whittling knife.



Morakniv Garberg

This may not be a knife that is specific to whittling in the way that most of the above options are, but if you are after a really excellent and exceptionally strong knife for all your bushcraft needs then look no further. As a recent addition to the Morakniv arsenal, the **Garberg** is a highly desirable knife for those who need something for all their camp and bushcraft needs, including wood carving and whittling. The 4.3" long blade makes it tricky for work on intricate whittling projects, but the strength of the 3.2mm thick full tang* blade makes it a dream to work with tough wood on bigger projects. It also boasts a comfortable, ergonomic grip

constructed of shock-resistant material, and the spine of the blade has been ground for use with a fire-starter.

A super strong and versatile knife that is ideal for general bushcraft and burly whittling projects.

*Full tang: the full width of the blade runs through the entire length of the handle which wraps around it in two parts. This makes the knife much stronger than a 'half tang' knife whose blade narrows inside the handle.

Sharpening Knife

When whittling, it is very important to use a whittling knife with a sharp blade. A dull blade is difficult to work with and will not provide the precision necessary to whittle. The best way to keep your knife sharp is by using a sharpening stone for whittling. Those sharpening tools are specially made to help keep the tough steel blade sharp and as thin as possible. Additionally, some models even

have a coarser side to smoothen edges directly on the wood. Very practical.

For this knife sharpening method you will need:

- A two-sided sharpening stone
- An assortment of fine pieces of sandpaper
- A scrap of leather



One sharpening stone for whittling that we recommend is **Old Timer SSOTCP**. This sharpening stone is double sided with a fine 350 grit side and a coarser 180 grit backside. The fine side is used for honing and the coarser edge for smoothing out edges. It is very versatile and will come in handy more often than not. It is also quite affordable regardless of how low your budget is.

The most important thing to know about how to whittle is that **it is much easier if you have a very sharp knife**. The sharper the better.

Best Wood for Whittling

As stated above, the best wood for whittling for beginners is softwood. They are much easier to work with. Once you've developed some skills, you can move on to more difficult and harder wood like Mahogany. The finish is well worth it. Hardwood also lasts much longer than soft wood and tend to keep their shape and texture better over time.

Additionally, we recommend that you go with wood that have straight grains. Even if the wood is a little bit coarse, like butternut, it is not really a problem as long as the wood grains are straight. They are easier to cut through and does not “chip” the wood in the wrong direction.

But, one problem remains. There are hundreds of softwoods that can make the choice somewhat confusing. To help you, here are some of the best wood whittling woods. They are can easily be found in any lumber yard.

Basswood: It is a light brown softwood with a very fine grain. It is extremely easy to cut through and ideal for beginners. You can use basswood with a pocket knife, but a professional whittling knife will give you a better result. Since it is so soft, basswood is one of the

best wood for beginners.



Balsa: It is another softwood that looks similar to basswood, except that it is a little bit deeper brown. The grains are straight and it is equally easy to whittle on. Balsa tends to turn yellow-brown as you whittle. This is a common characteristic of this wood and there

is nothing to worry about.



Butternut: It is one of the most popular whittling wood out there. It has bigger and coarser grains, but it is equally easy to work with as it chips away very easily. It is also a popular wood that can be

found in most lumber yards. With some luck, you can even get it



for free.

Twigs and Branches: Who would have guessed? One of the wonders of whittling is that you can work with twigs and branches. That's right! Unlike what you may think, twigs and branches are excellent materials to work with since they are extremely malleable and soft. You can make ornaments or decorative objects with them, and best of all, they are absolutely free of charge! Fallen twigs and branches will work just fine for your whittling projects.

Protective Gear for Safe Whittling

Whittling is not without its dangers. Remember, you are using a sharp knife to whittle and without protective gear, an accident is begging to happen. It is very important to always wear your protective gear while whittling, especially if you are an absolute beginner still learning this hobby. To help you whittle in a safer way, here are some protective gear that we recommend.

Large Thumb Guard



This protection gear is by far the best on the market. It slides over your thumb and does not prevent you from maneuvering your whittling knife. It is made from split leather with an elastic cloth backing. This means that it fits tight to your thumb while providing you with the protection that you need. What we like about this

model is that it is delivered as a pair, so whether you are right-handed or left-handed, you can still use this protection guard.

Cut Resistant Work Gloves



This glove is made from DuPont Kevlar which means that it is very cut resistant. While it is not technically a whittling protection gear, it will come in very handy since it is lightweight and allows you to maneuver your whittling knife with great ease. You can also use this protective gear for other purposes that require cutting and it will work just fine. It is very high-quality and should last you quite a while.

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 Wood

Whittling is not very hard. However, you still need some basic techniques to get the job done. Here is how to get started whittling in as few words as possible.

Choose the Wood: First, you will need to choose the wood. It is recommended to work only with softwood if you are a beginner as they are easier to cut. You cannot go wrong with wood like brass wood or butternut. You must also pay attention to the wood grain. Always work with wood that have a straight wood grain as they are much easier to cut without “chipping” away. You cannot go wrong with wood like basswood, butternut, and balsa. They are a whittler’s favorite.

Use a Whittling Knife: While you may be tempted to use a pocket knife, and you can, it is always recommended to use a dedicated whittling knife. They are designed to provide the comfort and reliability needed. They are also sharper than the regular pocket knife and deliver more accurate cuts. However, if you do not have a whittling knife handy, you can still go ahead and use the traditional pocket knife. Bear in mind that the experience will not be the same as using a specialty whittling knife.

How to Cut the Wood: Now that you have chosen your favorite wood and knife, hold the whittling knife's handle as firmly as you can and extend your thumb. Your thumb acts as a pivot and guides the blade over the wood. Then go in the direction of the wood grain and not against it. It will be much easier to cut and carve through the wood this way. By using your hand as the focal point, you are guaranteed to provide the necessary force to whittle with precision.

Keep your Blades Sharp: Your whittling knife has to remain sharp at all times. This is the first and most important rule of whittling. Before and after every use, make sure that you sharpen your knife using a sharpening stone for whittling. They usually have a very fine grit of around 320 which helps keep the blade ultra-sharp.

Wear Protection Gear: Of course, if you are an absolute beginner then you cannot whittle without having proper protection. You do not need fancy protection gear and a simple thumb protection cover will work just fine.

Types of Whittling Cuts

There are several types of whittling cuts you will have to perform while whittling. Seasoned whittlers use those whittling techniques every day to make awesome designs. Here are a few of the most common ones:

Straightaway Rough Cut:



With a straightaway rough cut, you make thin cuts on the wood and try to carve the general shape of the design you want to reproduce. As the name suggests, this is a rough cut and a preliminary step before starting to use more advanced techniques. However, we know a few whittlers that exclusively use the straightaway rough cut

to make a complete work of art. It might be difficult for newbies, but it is nice to know that the possibility is out there.

When using this technique, it is important not to cut too deep but rather “shave” thin layers, layer by layer. Take your time. The more you shave, the more you will find that the design will start appearing on the wood. Of course, a soft wood like basswood or butternut should be used with this whittling cut type. You will have a lot of difficulty whittling through hardwood with the straightaway rough cut method.

Pull Stroke:



With a pull stroke, you use your thumb as a pivot and pull the whittling knife towards you. This method is the most common whittling type and it is also a very comfortable position to work. The thumb allows the blade to maneuver with great accuracy and

this method works well with the straightaway rough cut. Simply draw a rough pattern using the straightaway rough cut and then use the pull stroke to get a more accurate carving out of your material. The pull stroke is the best method to get an accurate whittling pattern since you have so much control over your work this way.

It is highly recommended to use protection gear when using the pull stroke method as it is one of the riskiest whittling types.

Push Stroke:



The push stroke is the contrary of the pull stroke. With this method, you place your thumb on the back of the knife blade and push the blade over the material. Since you have the support of your thumb, the blade has more force to dig deeper into the material. It works only with a carving knife and not other tools like a V-knife or hood knife. However, both the pull stroke and the

push stroke are excellent whittling methods to get a detailed whittling result.

Best Whittling Tips

To help you make the most out of your whittling time, here are some quick tips and tricks that will surely come in handy.

- Always use a short blade of no more than 1.5 inches. The shorter the blade, the more control you have over your whittling as your hands will be closer to the material.
- If you are a beginner, never use hardwood like Mahogany, leave alone white oak. They are very difficult to work with. Go with softwood like basswood or butternut for ease of use.
- Draw a pattern or design using a #2 pencil before you start. It will be a guideline for your whittling.

- Go slowly and in small steps. Remember, you cannot go back once the cut is done. It is always better to know in advance where and what you want to carve before doing it.
- Your slides should be not too big and comfortably fit in your hand. Work with slides of around 4” in size, no more.

Tutorial Detail Whittling Projects for Beginners

1. The baby dinosaur



This instructable covers basic wood whittling technique. You will learn a little bit about tools, wood, technique, and safety. Hopefully it will be enough to get you interested in learning! Wood carving is not something you pick up overnight; it requires a lot of patience and practice. What you will find, however, is that as you practice you will develop intuition that will allow you to tackle increasingly difficult problems on your own. It's an enjoyable and relaxing activity that I would recommend to anyone interested in learning a new skill.

Step 1: Tools



Knife

You're going to need a knife. While you could conceivably use any kind of sharp knife, I highly recommend investing in something nice... I use the chip carving knife pictured here. High quality tools

are going to be hand-made with tempered steel that will cut better and last longer than the low quality stuff. There are chip carving knives with different shapes that will make difficult cuts a little easier, although they aren't necessary for the beginner.

Sharpening_Supplies:

You'll be putting your knife/knives through a lot of stress and thus you will need to sharpen them. You can buy sharpening stones or you can use a combination of 600+ grit sandpaper and water or oil. Any piece of leather will work as a strop. I won't get into sharpening in this instructable, however there are plenty of resources out there for you to learn.

Step 2: Wood

So once you have your tools, you'll need something to carve. There are tons of different kinds of wood and they all carve differently. My recommendation (and the wood that I learned how to carve with) is basswood. It's cheap and you should be able to find it locally. The grain is small and the wood is soft.

However, it isn't crucial that you even *know* what kind of wood you have, so don't worry. Use what you have— that's part of the fun of

carving wood.

Make sure the wood is dry; you'll have more control over it.

Carving with wet wood adds a level of unpredictability, since as it dries it tends to warp and crack.

Step 3: Grain





Understanding grain is essential to wood carving... This is where your intuition will develop over time. While I will not go into the science behind the structure of wood, I will say that it grows in regular patterns that appear as grain. The orientation of the grain is going to determine how easily you can carve the wood. If you've ever had a splinter, you know what grain is and how its orientation matters .

You will want to start with straight-grain wood (which is exactly what it sounds like), where the grain runs in one direction. You can use the ends to determine what direction the grain runs in. The pictures below show you what to look for. Note that the grain can go *down* slightly... this will be important.

Basic vocabulary is as follows: when you are carving in the same direction as the grain, you are carving *with the grain*. If you are carving opposite the direction of the grain, you are carving *against the grain*. If you are carving perpendicular to the grain, you are carving *across the grain*.

Which way to carve.

You always want to carve *with the grain* or *across the grain*. The grain can also run up and down slightly, so make sure you are carving with the grain in the **down** direction. The next step contains pictures of carvings in each direction for your reference.

Step 4: Safety / Holding the Knife



Before we start, let's go over **holding the knife correctly**:

The picture below will show you how to hold the knife. When right-handed, my left hand is holding the piece of wood and my right hand is holding the knife. My left thumb is on the back of the blade and will be providing the cutting force. **Never push the blade forward with your right hand**; you will not be able to move the blade with precision .

Notice that my fingers are out of the path of the blade.

Don't be silly :

Never push hard on the blade. If it gets stuck (because you carved too deep into the wood or the grain orientation changed), stop and backtrack. If you try to force the blade, it could slip and cut your finger .

There's no need to go fast... Speed doesn't help you carve better.

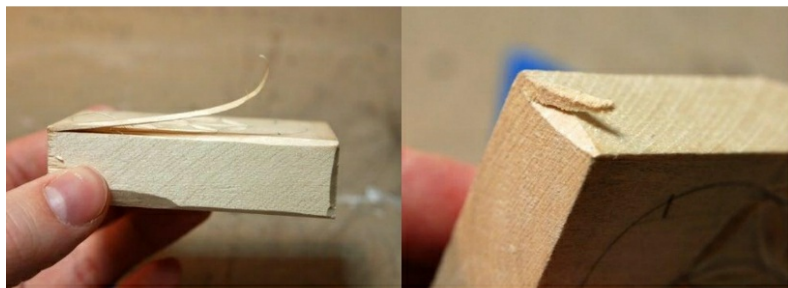
Take your time, at least until you feel comfortable carving.

Pay attention :

The sound and the feel of your cuts are important. You can hear the difference between carving with, against, and across the grain.

This will be useful in developing intuition about the direction you are cutting in .

Step 5: Technique



So let's figure out what **actually happens** when you carve: You'll be making a scooping motion. First, the knife has to dig into the surface of the wood a little bit. The knife must then be pushed through the wood; it's all about the angle! As you push through the wood, angle the knife up ever-so-slightly and you will have shaved

off a bit of wood. With many types of wood, the shavings will curl; this is an indication that you are going in the right direction

. You should remove the wood in very thin layers; if you go too deep, you'll end up tearing out on the way back up. The pictures below will show you what it looks like when you go with the grain, against the grain, and across the grain. Also, your shavings are fairly informative. Check out the difference between shavings going against the grain and shavings going with the grain

Step 6: Practice



A good way to learn knife control is to try keeping the knife at a fixed angle; see how long of a shaving you can make in one cut.

The more you carve, the more you will understand the grain. It's somewhat difficult to explain in a paragraph with a few pictures, but it will make sense as you experience it first-hand. Start with gently curving objects that allow you some room to make mistakes. As you get better, add details regardless of the orientation of the grain; there is always a way to make the right cut.

2. Carved Viking Chess Piece

Step 1: 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



I start to shape the face and beard of the viking. I keep the cuts coarse at this stage.

Step 4: The Fine Cuts



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

Step 5: More Inspiration



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

3. Spoon Carving

Step 1: Tools and Materials



I'm going to share my process for spoon carving in this Instructable. It's by no means the official way to do it, or even, a carving purists way to do it since it involves the use of several power tools that all remove wood more quickly than hand carving. Please just use this Instructable as an inspirational guide to start carving wooden spoons and utensils, and not as the end all word on the very complex and highly skilled

process of wood carving, of which, I am by no means an expert or qualified teacher.

Tools and Materials:

- sharp carving knives including at least a medium straight knife and a rounded or sweep gouge. (I bought my knives from Flexcut)
- chunk of soft wood a little larger than the size of spoon you'd like to carve (more on wood choices in the following step)
- 80, 120, 220 & 400 grit sandpaper
- small diameter (1"-2") sanding drum or flap wheel
- pen or marker
- food safe wood finish (like a butcher block oil or beeswax finish) or mineral oil
- Optional Power Tools:

- belt sander
- dremmel tool
- scroll saw
- table saw

Step 2: The Wood



The most important thing to first consider when carving a spoon is the type of wood that you're going to use. While it's possible to carve virtually any type

of wood given the right tools and techniques, some are easier than others to learn. Since this is spoon carving for beginners, let's try to keep things easy. The easiest kinds of wood to carve are soft types wood. Think about using something that feels fairly light in your hand, like:

- Basswood
- Pine
- Cedar
- Redwood
- Fir

That being said, I really enjoyed working with the softer side of the hardwood range, specifically cherry .

Hardwoods that would be more difficult to carve include:

- Oak
- Maple
- Walnut
- Rosewood
- Exotics
- Teak

Follow these general points when choosing a wood:

- Test it out and see how it feels to try and actually carve a piece off.
- Look for short grain, not long grain patterns - long grain seems to chip away in big pieces, you want small pieces to chip off so you can carve with more precision and control. I tried carving a piece of amapola for example and huge uncontrollable chunks came off without warning. This made it hard to carve.

- Look for soft varieties when possible, maple for example is very hard and will be hard to carve by hand.

As a beginner the absolute easiest wood to try carving is Basswood, so it might be best to start there. As I said before, I found Cherry to be a great balance between hard and soft wood.

A note about wood allergies for the beginning woodworker

Finally, it should be noted that wood, like many of the substances that we live with can be a potential allergen to certain individuals. Some types of wood, like cocobolo have known respiratory and skin effects. Other varieties, such as cherry, are known to be generally safe and inert. Wood dust from virtually any species of tree can have adverse respiratory effects over a long enough time period. It's important that

we all mitigate these possible risks and make informed decisions about the things we expose ourselves to on a day to day basis. While most woods are generally safe to work with, if you are just getting involved in woodworking this simple database of known allergies is worth taking a look at.

Step 3: Draw a Spoon



Once you've selected your block of wood (I'm using Cherry in the example below) draw a very rough outline of the spoon that you'd like to carve. It need not be detailed, as this outline will only be used to create the spoon blank. Drawing a profile of the spoon you'd like to carve from the side view on the block of wood is also useful, but not necessary .

There are literally endless different designs for spoons. Check out some galleries and get inspired. Things can get pretty crazy in the wooden spoon world!

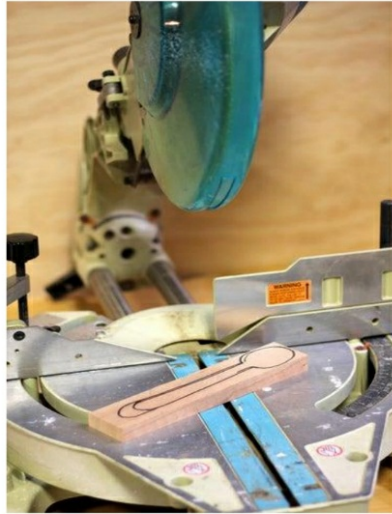
Some things I have begun to consider in designing my spoons are:

- spoon size
- type of spoon head

- should it fit in my mouth?
- depth of spoon depression
- thickness and heft
- intended purpose - salad, soup, serving, nibbling, scooping etc

Step 4: Cut Blank





If the spoon you want to carve is smaller than the piece of wood you've selected, use the table saw to cut the chunk into a thinner piece so you have to remove less material by hand when carving. Then, use the miter saw to cut the chunk of wood to length at the ends of your spoon outline .

Something that's fun to do is to create many blanks at once and then pass them out to your friends so you can all carve together. Bring some knives and it's a carving party!

Step 5: Detail Cutting



Next, use a scroll saw to cut along your outline. I tried to cut as close to my spoon sketch as possible since that's less material to remove later. That being said, if you want to have more material to be creative with as you carve, give yourself a little more room. You can't go wrong by making your blank a bit larger and thicker than the intended finished spoon, you can always remove more material later .

If you want to spend more time carving - simply skip this step and remove more material by hand using the carving tools.

Step 6: Rough Sanding



This step is completely optional, but since it was sitting right next to me, I used the belt sander to quickly round over the edges on the spoon and sand down to my spoon outline. Again, anything done with a power tool just saves you the work of having to do it by hand in the forthcoming carving step.

Step 7: Begin Carving



Finally, let's make some wood shavings! Now at the very beginning it's useful just to get a feel for the knife and how it removes material from your spoon blank. Carving along the shaft or handle of the spoon is the easiest place to practice. Start by taking small strokes, removing small amounts of material, and carving away from yourself. While there are situations where you can safely carve towards yourself, at the beginning it's easier to just carve away. Think about removing small chunks of material strategically from the tops of curves. Carving down, into notches is more difficult and so I usually like to orient the wood to my knife so that I'm carving over the crest of a curve or along a straight line. Diving the knife down usually results in a larger-than-intended

piece of material cleaving off. Better to stay in control of the cut and carve along the top of the material .

Turning a square block-like blank into a smooth spoon takes time - as in, several hours. So, don't expect the spoon to take form instantly, instead, just stay with it and work slowly towards the goal.

Step 8: Add More Detail



As the spoon begins to take shape and you begin to round over some of the straight lines in the blank, it's time to start adding in more detail and making some

basic decisions regarding:
handle thickness

- how the handle tapers and fits your hand?
- how long the handle should be?
- how wide the spoon should be?
- does the spoon have a curved or flat leading edge?
- spoon head thickness

The spoon pictured below has a blunt straight head, more like a spatula that's good for scraping the bottoms of sauce pans and removing brown tasty bits...of course, this would not make a very good soup spoon.

Step 9: Back of Spoon Head



Once you've roughed out the handle of the spoon it's time to start working on the head. I found it easier to start with the convex back of the spoon rather than the dished out concave side. Begin removing material along the edges of the blank and round out the spoon head to make a smooth transition from the back of the spoon to the rim/wall . Keep rounding out the back of the spoon and creating a smooth continuous slope.

Step 10: Front of Spoon Head



On to the concave side of the spoon - use a rounded sweep gouge or hook knife to start removing material from the face of the spoon.

Remove small bits of material until you begin to form a small divit. Keep removing material digging out wood closer and closer to the outer wall of your spoon.

I alternated between gouging from the center of the spoon towards the wall and working the tool down the wall of the spoon towards the center. Different strokes for different folks...and tired hands.

The hook knife was useful for shallow divots, but not very good at digging deep. That's where the sweep gouge comes in handy.

Step 11: Sand Away Carving Marks



After extensive hand carving it was time to smooth out the carving marks with some sanding.

I used a small drum hand sanding attachment for a rotary tool, a 1"

diameter 80 grit flap wheel and the small Dremel sanding heads to sand the inside concave dish of the spoon. Hand sanding and a belt sander do just fine for the easier to reach back and handle of the spoon.

Step 12: Detail Sanding



After the mechanical sanding came a bunch of detail hand sanding.

Starting with 120 grit paper and working my way up to 220 incrementally, I sanded every knook and cranny of the spoon smoothing out any remaining carving tool marks and making all the surfaces pleasurable to hold and splinter-free.

Step 13: Protective Finish





As a final step, apply a food-safe protective finish to the smoothly sanded spoon.