

WOOD WHITTLING GUIDES

Making Stunning Stuffs Using Wood Whittling Technique



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Introduction



If you've ever spent some time outside, chances are high that you've seen someone sitting by a campfire working away at a small piece of wood with a knife. Whether they were making a spoon or a cute little figurine, whittling is a time-honored outdoor tradition that many people love to this day.

Whittling is a great pastime for the man who wants to craft something, but may not have the room or tools to say, build a dining room table. Or for the man looking for something meditative to help him center his thoughts. Or simply for the guy who wants to while away time on a camping trip. It's one of the cheapest and most accessible hobbies you can take up—all you need is a knife and some wood.

I can't say I ever whittled a pumpkin-straw trombone or a little

windmill, but as a boy I did pare many a stray twig into a tiny spear (small, yet surely capable of downing a saber-tooth tiger if needed be).



Now as a grown man I'm always looking for ways to settle my mind and new hobbies to try my hand at. When I think of relaxation, my mind often turns to the old man sitting on the porch in a rocking chair, a knife in one hand, a piece of wood in the other. And so recently I decided to explore my boyhood pastime in greater depth.

Today I'd like to share what I've learned with you about how to get started with whittling.

People who try to get into whittling, however, quickly learn that it's not as simple as it looks. Sure, you could just pick up a twig and start slashing away at it with a knife, but you'd probably hurt yourself before you made anything useful. To help you out, we've created the ultimate beginner's guide to whittling. We'll discuss the best wood, help you find the best knife, go over safety techniques, and the different types of cuts all to get you ready for your new whittling hobby.

What exactly is whittling?



Whittling, by definition, is the shaping of wood by repeatedly scraping small bits of it away. This is distinctly different from something like carving, where one uses a chisel and mallet. It's a fairly simple activity to get in to, as one only needs wood, a knife, and a little creativity.

Playing with knives... Not something to recommend to, well anyone really. But idle hands will find their way to a blade at some point, so curiosities may as well be channelled into something positive – like whittling! With a little guidance the ancient art of carving wood with

a knife doesn't need to turn into a first aid emergency. In fact it can be a highly relaxing and therapeutic pastime – perfect for the creative camper to while away the hours in deep contemplation of the serenity that surrounds them. The ultimate getaway from the modern world.



But it's not just campers who enjoy the remedies of whittling wood. If you are an aspiring carpenter and don't have the luxury of a shed dedicated to your craft, a knife and chunk of whittle wood might just be the next best thing.

Many people enjoy whittling while outside on a camping trip because it is a great way to pass the time without adding too much weight or bulk to your pack. Since many people generally have a knife on them while camping, the only extra item you need is a small piece of wood that you've brought from home or a random branch you found while hiking.

Best woods for whittling



Although you could whittle with any kind of wood, softwoods are usually the best for whittling because they're easier to cut. That being said, once you've mastered the art of whittling on softwoods, moving on to harder woods can add a new layer of challenge and keep you engaged.

There are quite a few different softwoods that you'll likely find yourself whittling with as you start out. Many of these are easy to find at a craft store, lumber yard, or woodworking store and are quite affordable. Regardless of what kind of wood you choose, however, try to find wood with a fairly straight grain and minimal knots. Wood with grain in multiple directions and plenty of knots is a real pain to whittle!

In the past I would pick up whatever wood was lying around the forest to get my campsite whittling projects going. But I was often

choosing hardwood that became very tricky to work with as a beginner whittler, and usually, I just gave up. So as tempting as it may be to just grab whatever's there, I would recommend being a little more selective about your whittling wood.

Try to avoid wood with knots and growth rings and, where possible, avoid wood where the grain goes in multiple directions – a straight grain is easier. Examples of softwoods to look for in the forest are Fir, Pine, Cedar, Larch and Spruce.

Softwoods are the best for whittling because they cut nice and easy. After you've learned the basics of whittling, feel free to move on to harder woods. No matter which kind of wood you use, look for wood with a straight grain as it is easier to whittle than wood that has the grain going in multiple directions. Avoid wood with lots of knots—those are a booger to whittle.

But if you are getting serious about your whittling then you can buy small whittling wood blocks at your local craft or hardware store which will be perfect for your first whittling project. Look for:

Basswood

Pine

Balsa

Basswood



Basswood has been a popular wood carving material for millennia because it's fairly soft and has little grain. This made it the wood of choice for German sculptors in the middle ages who were tasked with creating elaborate wood carvings for alters and other church artifacts.

Balsa



Balsa is a great wood for beginning whittlers because it is a soft, lightweight wood, which makes it easy to scrape away. Plus, it's pretty inexpensive, so you won't be distraught if you mess up on one of your early balsa creations.

Pine



A widely available wood, pine is great for the beginning whittler. As a soft and easily cut wood, it's great if you're just starting out, but it's important to note that many experienced whittlers don't think pine holds detail well, so it's not the best option for an ornate piece. Plus, if you're using a piece of fresh pine that you found on the ground, you'll have to frequently clean sticky sap off of your knife.

Butternut



Butternut is a lesser-known wood that's great for beginner whittling. It's a bit darker than basswood but has a nice grain texture that's easy to whittle. Plus, it polishes nicely and is very soft, which makes it great for working with. Butternut does frequently have wormholes, though, so don't be too surprised if you find one in something you're whittling!

Random twigs and branches

The best part about whittling? You don't need to buy any fancy, expensive wood to create something awesome. If you're out hiking, you can easily pick up a twig or branch off the ground and whittle

away around a campfire. Sure, you'll be able to pick out a nicer block of wood at a craft store, but what's more memorable than whittling a trinket in the evenings of a fantastic camping trip?

Best knife for whittling



Perhaps the most critical whittling tool is a knife because without it, we'd only have a piece of uncarved wood. Although they might seem like simple tools, there are a lot of different knives on the market today, some of which are good options for whittling and others which are best used for other purposes. If you're looking to get a new knife as you embark on your new whittling hobby. 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.

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.

Opinel Carbon Steel Folding Everyday Carry Locking Pocket Knife



A simple and sturdy tool, this folding pocket knife is a classic option for whittling and every day carry. The Opinel carbon steel is extremely hard and durable, which means it cuts well, resists wear, and is easy to sharpen. Plus, all Opinel knives are made with their signature Virobloc safety ring to fix the knife open while you're whittling.

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!

Pros:

Affordable

Durable blade that's easy to sharpen

Easy-to-use blade lock

Cons:

Carbon steel blade corrodes when wet



Opinel Carbon Steel Folding Everyday Carry Locking Pocket Knife

Carbon Steel (X90) Blade

Blade Length: 3 3/16x"

Size Open: 7 1/16"

Weight: 1.3 oz



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.



Wood Carving Sloyd Knife



This wood carving-specific knife from Sloyd features a thin pointed tip for delicate wood cutting and detail work. The high-quality carbon steel blade allows for a good, straight, cut through both soft and hardwood, which is great from a whittler's perspective. Plus, the ergonomically designed handle is made of oak and pressed with linseed oil for a comfortable grip after hours of use.

Pros:

Affordable

Comfortable handle

Durable carbon steel blade

Cons:

Fixed blade is more difficult to transport

Carbon steel blade corrodes when wet

Wood Carving Sloyd Knife

★ □ GENERAL SLOYD KNIFE FOR WOOD CARVING: Knife is designed specifically for wood carving, green woodworking, whittling and roughing wood out. The thin pointed tip of the knife can be used for delicate wood cutting and allows working in tight areas of details. The rounded part of the blade allows cutting in the hollow areas and can be used to make rolled, slicing cuts.

★ □ HIGH-QUALITY CARBON STEEL BLADES: The blade of the sloyd knife is made of high-carbon steel and is hardened to proper firmness. Our wood carving tools are sharpened and polished so you can use it right from the box. We stand by our green woodworking tools quality, so you'll get all the necessary information about our whittling tools and appropriate help also.

★ □ WHITTling CUTTING EDGE is very sharp, which allows

you to cut soft wood. The cuts are very smooth and shiny. The cutting edge of sloyd knife is durable to cut hardwoods such as oak or walnut.

★ □ **ERGONOMIC HANDLE:** The outdoor whittling knife wood carving handle is made of hardwood oak and processed with natural linseed oil. The ergonomic design of the handle allows having a long period of comfortable wood carving without hand fatigue.

Morakniv Wood Carving 106 Knife with Laminated Steel Blade, 3.2-Inch



The Morakniv Wood Carving Knife is a quality precision whittling knife that's been made in Sweden since 1891. With an ergonomically designed handle made of oiled birch, this is the kind of knife that feels great in your hand after hours of whittling. The knife also has a 3.2 inch long durable laminated steel blade, which is favored by greenwood workers around the world.

Pros:

Super durable laminated steel blade

Comfortable oiled birch handle

Fixed blade comes with a sheath

Cons:

Fixed blades aren't the most practical for backpacking

Wood carving knife with a durable laminated steel blade

Oiled birch wood handle

Limited lifetime manufacturer's warranty.

Blade Thickness: 0.08" (2.0 mm), Blade Length: 3.2" (82 mm), Total Length: 7.4" (188 mm), Weight: 2.0 oz. (58g)

Flexcut Right-Handed Carvin' Jack



If you know that one tool just won't be enough for all your wood carving and whittling needs, the Flexcut Right-Handed Carvin' Jack might be the multi-tool for you. This jackknife is built with 6 different carving-specific edges and is designed for right-handed

whittlers. It includes a chisel, a carving knife, a hook knife, a v-scorp, gouge scorp, and a straight gouge, which means you can complete any project. Plus, the Carvin' Jack comes with a sharpening strop so you can keep your tools razor-sharp at all times.

Pros:

Multi-tool for different carving needs

Includes a sharpening tool

Made in the USA

Cons:

Right-handed only

Heavy and bulky

Expensive

Jackknife with 6 carving specific edge tools built in for right handed carvers

Chisel - Carving Knife - Hook knife - V scorp - gouge Scorp - Straight Gouge

Includes sharpening strop and Flexcut Gold polishing compound

Razor-sharp and ready to use right out of the included leather pouch

Flexcut JKN88 Whittlin' Jack, with 1-1/2 inch Detail Knife and 2-inch Roughing Knife



If you want the flexibility of having multiple whittling tools but don't want the weight, bulk, and expense of a large multi-tool, the Flexcut Whittlin' Jack might be what you're looking for. Build with two whittling-specific blades, including a 1.5-inch detail knife and a 0.5-inch roughing knife, the Flexcut Whittlin' Jack packs a lot of whittling prowess into a small package.

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.

Pros:

Whittling-specific multi-tool

Hard carbon steel blade is durable and retains sharpness

Made in the USA

Cons:

Carbon steel blade corrodes when wet

Handle isn't very comfortable.

Jackknife with two whittling specific blades

1 1-1/2 inch detail knife and 1 2 inch roughing knife

At just over 4 inches long it fits nicely into your pocket or pack

Razor-sharp hard carbon steel blade is ready to use right out of the package



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.

How to whittle safely



As whittling involves a knife, it's probably apparent that there is some level of risk involved in the activity. Even expert whittlers are known to slip up from time to time, so it's important to understand the basics of whittling safety. Regardless of your knowledge of basic whittling safety rules, however, complacency can easily cause an

accident to occur, so we need to be sure to follow these rules at all times.

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.

Kevlar glove

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

Start slowly

This one is both a safety rule and an artistic design rule. Whittling too quickly can easily cause a knife slip to occur and at a high speed. Plus, if you whittle too quickly you can mess up your potential design before you really even get started. Thus, we recommend starting

slowly and continuing to whittle slowly throughout the process.

Keep a sharp knife

Although you might think that a sharp knife is more dangerous than a dull one, dull knives actually take much more force to use and thus pose a higher risk of injury than a sharp knife. Especially when it comes to whittling, a dull knife will be very difficult to cut with and it'll feel like you're trying to carve away at a brick.

Keeping a sharp knife is a great way to help prevent accidents and to make your whittling as precise and effortless as possible. Whenever you start to feel that the wood you're whittling is getting harder to cut, stop and sharpen your knife.

Wear gloves

If you're a new whittler, we highly recommend that you wear a pair of gloves when you start out. This is a great extra safety precaution for when you're getting used to the different kinds of knife strokes and general knife handling. The gloves may feel a bit cumbersome at first, but you'll surely appreciate them should your knife slip.

Use a thumb guard

If you choose not to wear gloves, the next best alternative is a thumb guard. Due to the mechanics of whittling, the thumb on your

dominant hand (the one you hold the knife in) tends to suffer the vast majority of nicks and slices while whittling. A thumb pad is a cheap way to protect your thumb without having to wear a full glove. Sure, the thumb pad isn't as protective as a glove, but it's better than nothing.

Go with the grain

Whittling with the grain is a great way to make the entire process easier. When you whittle with the grain, your cuts will peel away smoothly. On the other hand, cuts made against the grain will tear, split, give you a lot of resistance, and look ugly.

The first step to cutting with the grain is to identify what the grain direction actually is. Sometimes this is as easy as just looking at the wood and looking at the way the grain runs. Other times, you need to do some shallow test cuts and get a sense of how the wood peels away in a given direction.

Types of whittling cuts



Hands wearing gloves cutting a small piece of wood.

While you could just start slicing away on a piece of wood, you'll get better results if you take the time to learn about the finer points of different whittling cuts. There are several different cutting styles out there for whittlers to use, but we've identified a few of the most common methods.

A quick note: Our directions are for right-handed whittlers. If you're left-handed, just flip our directions around!

Straight rough cut



This is a great cut for the beginning of a project to quickly carve out a general shape. To make a straight rough cut, hold the wood in your left hand and make a long sweeping cut with the knife in your right hand. The cuts should move away from your body and should go with the grain. It's best to make an abundance of shallow slices instead of a few deep cuts to shape the wood.

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 pull stroke (pare cut)



The pull stroke (also known as the pare cut) is one of the most popular whittling cuts. You've likely seen experienced whittlers using this cut to expertly craft pieces of wood with ease. It's a great cut if you need a lot of control over your blade while making detailed cuts.

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.

To use the pull stroke, you'll want to hold the wood in your left hand and have your knife in your right hand with the blade facing toward you. While bracing your right thumb against the wood, you'll squeeze your right-hand fingers toward your thumb to pull the blade closer to you.

As this cut involves moving a knife toward your body and toward

your hand, it's important to keep your stroke short and controlled. You should try to keep your right thumb out of the blade's path as much as possible. We also recommend wearing a thumb pad for extra protection.

The push stroke (thumb pushing)



When you can't use the pull stroke, the push stroke is a viable alternative. Like the pull stroke, the push stroke also gives you a good amount of control over the knife when you want to make detailed cuts.

To perform this stroke, you'll hold the wood in your left hand and hold your knife in your right hand with the blade facing away from you. Then, you'll place both of your thumbs on the back of the knife blade. Using your left thumb, you'll push the blade forward, while with your right thumb and fingers, you'll guide the blade as it moves through the wood.

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.

A good way to practice these strokes, or to introduce whittling to kids is to use a bar of soap.

Wood Whittling 101



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 over night; 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



Tools

Let's start with 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.

Most important of all, have a good time! (and don't hurt yourself)

Conclusion



Whittling is an art form, and like all art, you need to find a technique and style that works best for you. Every piece of wood and every knife will feel different in your hands and what you do with these objects will certainly be unique.

Our recommendation? Start slowly and simply. Choose a soft wood that's easy to cut and a knife that feels comfortable in your hands. Get a pair of gloves or a thumb guard for some extra security while you're learning the different cuts and be conservative in your movements. Over time, you'll build up the confidence you need to try out new techniques and make more elaborate designs.