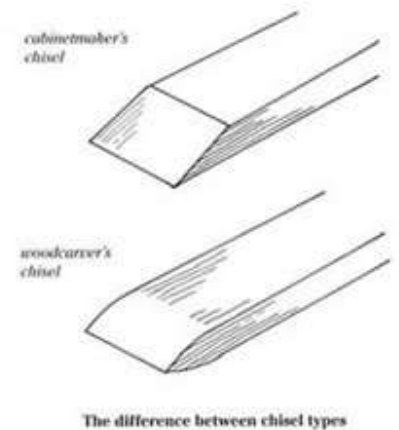


SHARPENING CARVING CHISELS

CARVING, SHARPENING

Rick and Ellen Bütz Posted on Aug 15, 2016 9:50 AM

The carver's chisel is beveled on both sides, unlike the chisel that cabinetmakers and carpenters use, which is flat on one side and ground at a 25-degree angle on the other. Cabinetmaker's chisels are designed for paring the straight, flat edges of woodworking joints. Because of the shape of the cutting angle, you cannot carve very well with them. They tend to dig in or skip out of the wood, depending on which side you are using.



Carving chisels are beveled on both sides at a 20-degree angle. This allows you to carve at a more efficient angle and remove chips cleanly. These flat chisels, often designated as sweep no. 1, are used to set in straight lines on relief carvings or to smooth the surface of a rounded shape, such as the top edge of the wing on an American eagle carving.

Carving chisels' cutting edges can be ground perpendicular to the shaft of the blade or at an angle. The angled gouges, called skew chisels, are useful for getting into corners and other narrow spaces.

A carver's chisel is sharpened almost the same way as a knife. Put a few drops of oil on a sharpening stone for lubrication. Hold the chisel at a 20-degree angle to the stone, and slide the cutting edge up and down along the length of the stone. Work both sides of the blade evenly until a burr edge forms along the cutting edge.



Test for the burr by very lightly dragging your finger away from the cutting edge. If you can feel a slight roughness, the blade is ready for the next step. You can remove the burr edge with just a strop the same way you did with the knife, or you can use a slip stone to hone away some of the burr before the final polishing on the strop.

Hold a square ceramic slip stone at a 45-degree angle to the blade, and stroke it lightly along the cutting edge. Do this on both sides of the blade.



Then remove any remaining bits of burr edge and polish the tool with a leather strop. Draw the blade across the strop away from the cutting edge the same way you did with the knife. Work first one side of the blade and then the other until the whole burr is removed.

Just rest the cutting edge of the blade very lightly on your fingernail. If the blade skids across your nail, it needs more work. If it catches slightly or feels sticky, the blade is ready to use.



Skew chisels are sharpened the same way as straight ones, except that you hold the tool at an angle to the side of the sharpening stone so that the cutting edge is perpendicular to the length of the stone. Hold it in the same position when you strop.