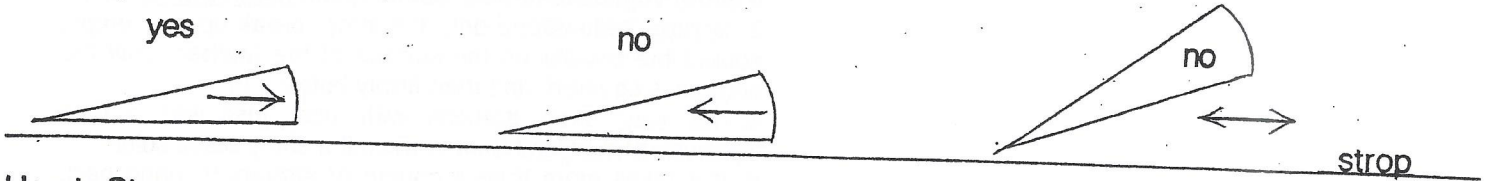


## GENERAL SHARPENING INSTRUCTIONS by Del Stubbs, Pinewood Forge

### STROPPING:

Remember- stropping IS sharpening. However, careless stropping can easily round and ruin a tool's edge. The secret is careful stropping with good materials. A standard woodcarver's leather strop with compound and good technique is all that is needed to keep most tools working well most of the time. There are dozens of fine polishing compounds available from hardware stores and carvers catalogs. (Zam, Fabuluster, Dico Stainless, are ones I use). I don't recommend jewelers rouge...it's soft.



### How to Strop:

When stropping, lay the tool flat on the leather, polishing the whole surface with solid pressure. The tool's edge will compress slightly into the softness of the leather - this will sharpen the microscopic bevel at the edge. Pressing firmly - using a few strokes in both directions should be enough to bring a slightly dull tool back to razor sharpness.

### Is your brand of stropping compound working well?

Try this: After applying a fresh coat of compound, the very first stroke of the tool should leave black streaks on the strop, and mirror polish on the tool. If it leaves only a dull grey color on the strop, the compound is too soft (not removing enough metal). If the tool is left dull or scratchy looking, it is too coarse a polish.

### If stropping isn't working well for you, here are possible reasons:

- The tool needs honing (see next section).
- Your compound is too slow cutting.
- You are not able to press hard enough. In this case, raise the back of the tool very slightly off of the strop - this will put all of the pressure on the edge.
- If stropping rounds over the edge, then likely the strop is of too rough or too soft a material, or you're raising the back too much - go to a harder or finer leather, hard cardboard (like a cereal box), or to smooth basswood as a strop. You should be able to press quite hard while stropping, without rounding the edge. It's better to take a few strong and careful strokes than a lot of light careless ones.

### HONING:

The tools I produce are such that they rarely need honing! But when to hone? Hone when stropping no longer easily brings the tool back to razor sharpness, or when there is a nick to remove. To hone, you may lift the tool only slightly off the back if necessary (not more than half the thickness of the tool). This will keep the edge thin. Stop honing either side when a very tiny burr is raised on the entire edge. Feel this burr by stropping the tool lightly backwards against a finger. Remove this burr, with a super fine hone, or with your strop, but use the strop for the finished edge.

### Which Hone?

Fine diamond, ceramic, fine india, arkansas, all work well. Do not use a coarse carborundum bench stone, unless the edge is damaged badly. Do not use a high speed grinder. If your tool is damaged and needs lots of metal removal, a coarse diamond hone or water cooled slow speed flat grinder is all I would recommend.

### IS IT SHARP?

There is only one test that I know of that can actually tell that a tool is sharp (shaving hair means little - a tool that is full of nicks can still shave hair). I learned this test from a Japanese furniture maker. Take a piece of clear white cedar if you can find it. (basswood can work but is more difficult to read). Cut or split it to a piece about 1/4" x 1", like a thick paint stick, and take a long slicing sloped and angled cut across the end grain. Look very closely at this surface, use magnification. If it is very shiny, clear and dark, you have a perfect edge (all knives I make pass this test before I sell them). Even the tiniest microscopic ding or nick functions like a little bulldozer - it will leave a tiny whitish streak of crushed fibers across the cut surface. If the entire cut surface is crumpled, dull or broken looking, then the entire edge is dull and acts even more like a bulldozer. See if a few strokes of stropping will fix this, if not - then start with a fine hone.

## HERB'S "YELLOWSTONE" for a 'Magic Edge'

YELLOWSTONE has a 'peachy' color.

### PREPARE THE STROP--

1. *NEVER* use a strop that has OIL on it!! For best results, start with a new strop having a 3.5 oz. (slightly thicker than a dime) vegetable-tanned leather glued rough side up on it.
3. Scrape Yellowstone onto the strop, break up any lumps, spread the powder on the surface of the leather until the surface is covered, and then firmly butter it in.
4. As your strop darkens with use, just add a little Yellowstone now and then to keep it a shiny black color.
5. If it takes more than a couple of strokes to bring back your edge, either you have waited too long to sharpen, or you need to put some fresh Yellowstone on your strop.
6. When the strop feels 'sticky,' you have achieved the best maintenance of your edge.

- ### TO STROP--
1. Lay the blade DEAD FLAT on the strop.
  2. Start at the base of the blade. As the edge of the blade moves along the strop, press it firmly against the leather raising the heel of your hand to bend the blade a little (to put pressure on the tip, which does most of the work). Look for a little ripple in the leather as the blade moves along.
  3. STROP SLOWLY, making sure you keep the blade DEAD FLAT and come to a DEAD STOP. At the end of each stroke, lift the blade straight up. Then turn the blade over and do the other side.
  4. Later when the knife loses its bright edge, one or two firm strokes in each direction will usually bring it back.
  5. Properly stropped, a blade will never need stoning unless it is damaged or dropped.
  6. If the strop builds up black and sticky, this is the best edge-maintenance you're going to get anywhere, so don't hurry to scrape it off.

### STONING A BLADE--

If you have accidentally rounded one of my edges, lay your blade flat on a fine stone, leaving a silver hairline of edge. Then strop with fresh compound on your strop. If you have nicked or damaged the edge, you of course must take enough metal off to bring it to a fine wire edge. With fresh compound, first strop burr-side-up. Then turn it over and strop again. On a crooked knife you must strop on the inside of the curve and keep the back flat. Always use fresh compound after stoning a blade. Knives that have angles different from mine must be stoned and stropped according to the angle. Yellowstone can also be used on wood or other porous materials, or can be applied directly to a wheel.

If you have problems sharpening your tools, feel free to call me and we'll walk you through both stropping and tool repair.

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