



## Woodturning Safety Tips

Effective May 2018

### ⚠ WARNING

Like other types of woodworking, woodturning is inherently dangerous. Failure to use tools and equipment properly or to follow recommended safety guidelines could result in serious injury or death. It's your responsibility to make sure you know enough about your tools and equipment and how to properly use them before attempting a turning project. Always be sure to read, understand and follow the most current instructions and safety warnings for your lathe and other tools. If you have any questions about how to use your lathe and tools properly and safely, please seek further instruction from an expert.

#### General Guidelines

- Read, understand and follow all instructions and safety warnings that came with your lathe and other tools before attempting to use them. Failure to comply with safety warnings in your tools' owner's manuals could result in serious injury.
- Maintain your lathe as directed in the owner's manual. Check for damage, poor alignment, binding – anything that could spell trouble when you turn the lathe on.
- Do not attempt to operate a lathe without first obtaining proper training or developing proper knowledge about how it works and can be used safely.
- Never operate a lathe or any other power tool if you are ill, tired, distracted or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Prevent unexpected distractions. Keep children and pets away from the lathe area while you're working, and make sure anyone entering area knows not to try to get your attention while the lathe is running.
- Exposure to wood dust can result in sensitization of the skin and respiratory system, potentially resulting in severe allergic reactions (such as asthma or dermatitis) after repeated exposure or exposure to lower concentrations of the dust. Always work in an area with adequate ventilation, and wear a dust mask, respirator or air-circulating helmet to prevent inhalation of harmful dust. A respirator is an especially good idea when sanding and when working with exotic woods.
- Keep the floor in your work area clean and uncluttered to avoid slipping or tripping as you move while you turn. Make sure you have adequate light and space to move.
- Always wear an OSHA/ANSI-compliant full face shield while woodturning. Wood being turned rotates at high speeds and could cause serious injury if it comes off the lathe. Normal eyeglasses do not offer adequate protection.
- Wear appropriate hearing protection, especially during extended periods of turning.
- Do not wear anything that could get caught in the lathe while it is running. That means no rings, watches or other jewelry. Wear short sleeves, or roll long sleeves up past the elbows. Do not wear loose clothing. Tie back long hair. Do not wear gloves while turning.

#### Getting Set at the Lathe

- Make sure to position yourself on the correct side of the lathe; the work should rotate toward you.
- Check the lathe speed setting before starting the lathe. Start the lathe at the slowest speed and keep it there until the workpiece is turned round and balanced. Maintain a slow speed for larger-diameter turnings. Match the speed to the type of turning project.
- Always turn off the lathe and allow it to come to a full stop before adjusting the position of the tool rest or tool rest holder (banjo). Never adjust the tool rest while the lathe is running. Never stop a rotating workpiece with your hand.

- Before starting the lathe, make sure that the workpiece is mounted securely between the drive center of the headstock and the live center of the tailstock or is held securely with a four-jaw chuck. Even when the workpiece is secured in a chuck, use the tailstock whenever possible as an added measure of safety.
- Position the tool rest as close to the workpiece as you can, but make sure that it won't contact any part of the workpiece during turning. Reposition the tool rest after removing material from your workpiece to maintain needed support for your tools.
- Before starting the lathe, always spin the workpiece by hand to make sure it clears the bed of the lathe, the tool rest and the tool rest holder (also called the banjo). Always check to make sure that all handles are locked tight.
- Make sure that all guards, belt covers and other safety features are in place and secure before starting the lathe. Remove any loose items, tools or unnecessary workpieces from the work area before starting the machine.
- Check your workpiece for any splits, cracks, inclusions or other defects that could compromise the integrity of the wood and possibly lead to the workpiece coming apart or coming off the lathe. Do not attempt to turn blanks that have significant defects.
- Continue to check the workpiece as you turn, stopping the lathe regularly to evaluate for defects revealed by the removal of material.
- Never leave the lathe running unattended.
- Keep your turning tools sharp. A keen cutting edge leaves a better surface and requires less pressure into the wood to cut, reducing the likelihood of a dangerous catch. Never force a dull tool.
- Maintain a balanced stance. Do not overreach or use excessive force to perform any machine operation.
- Always keep fingers behind the tool rest when turning. Serious injury could result if your fingers get caught between the tool rest and your turning stock.
- Use both hands to maintain complete control of your turning tools, with one hand forward to control the cutting edge and the other back, gripping the handle.
- To minimize the likelihood of dangerous catches, always bring the tool to the tool rest first, make sure you've got it anchored there and then apply it to the spinning workpiece.
- Always move the banjo out of the way and remove the tool rest before sanding a workpiece on the lathe. If you don't, you risk jamming your fingers or twisting your wrist.
- Never use cloth to apply finish or polish while a project is spinning on the lathe. The cloth could catch and pull your hand into the turning, potentially resulting in serious injury. Never wrap applicator material around your fingers.

## **Using Turning Tools**

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- Use tools only as they are intended to be used. Unintended use could result in serious injury or death. NEVER USE A SPINDLE ROUGHING GOUGE ON A BOWL. Spindle roughing gouges are not constructed to handle the stresses involved in face turning and could break, potentially resulting in serious injury.