

Separating wood from wood – available tools

Basically all the tools used to cut wood rely on a sharp edge. This is most evident in the chisel with its bevel. The standard carpenters' chisel will have an angle in the range 25 - 35 degrees. For wood carving, however, the bevel has a second purpose. It provides a pivot so that a scooping cut can be made.

[Diagram and/or photo/s to go here]

With the gouge, which is the workhorse among chisels, you must keep the corners clear of the wood to avoid tearing.

The following other tools have application in carving projects.

1 Sandpaper, Garnet, Glass, Carborundum and other minerals deposited on sheets which are used with a sanding block or just folded over. Used as continuous bands in such as a Linisher or Bobbin Sander they are excellent not only at the finishing stage but also for removing wood quickly. They are particularly good for achieving smooth curves and transitions when making abstract pieces.

2 Files. Not usually a first choice but generally very useful and almost essential if you are working with really hard wood. Rasps have more aggressive surfaces and overall a wide range of 'grades' is available. Specialist small files known as riflers are shaped so that they can be used to get into undercut areas. Files are harder than chisels and so more brittle so handle with care. In general they are not expensive. The name to buy is 'Wiltshire'.

3 Surform files. They have multiple teeth each like a small plane blade. Good with all types of wood and useful for curved pieces. They are available in various cross sections with the round one valuable for enlarging holes. A modern variant is the Microplane which has smaller teeth and which leaves a very smooth finish. These are available at Woolies where they are sold for kitchen use (Zesters).

4 Draw Knife. This is basically a long plane blade which has no constraints and which is free to be used at any angle. Care is required as it can very easily remove more wood than you intend.

5 Spokeshave. This is a more delicate form of the draw knife with the basic construction of a plane. It is a precision tool and very controllable. The old wooden handled models came in various sizes. The modern all metal type seems to be made in only one size. You can, however, get it with a curved blade.

6 Attachments to an Angle Grinder. There are quite a few available. The cutting device is either a random arrangement of sintered metal deposited on a mushroom like or rod like base, or it is a tungsten carbide blade set so that it peels the wood. Mainly used for roughing out. The finish is better than you might expect and the rate of wood removal is impressive. They can be expensive so try before you buy.

7 Power Chisels. These can be purchased as an attachment to an angle grinder or as a custom unit. Using a cam the chisel vibrates when under load. They work well but so far only a fairly limited set of chisels is available. Prolonged use may lead to RSI problems.

8 Band Saw. These are very useful when cutting out the basic shape from a

rectangular block or piece which has a flat base. Otherwise it is not safe and you need accreditation before using this appliance.

9 Chainsaw, Axe, Adze. All these have a place but require accreditation and practice. While all of these devices appear to be robust and designed for massive wood removal, appearances are deceptive. The chainsaw blades must be sharp and kept that way. The axes likewise are razor sharp and unskilled use will very easily cause fracture of the edge. Adze operation requires the combination of a hearty swing aimed at wood between your feet. Not a comfortable scenario. Unless you have a yen to be a chainsaw/axe/adze specialist I suggest you avoid these tools.

All the above tools are available either from the Carving cabinet or generally in the Shed. So ask and thou wilt be shown.