

How to Use a Leather Honing Block

A leather strop, whether it is the traditional old-fashioned razor strop or a simple piece of leather glued to a block of wood, is a terrific, simple way to keep your tools as sharp as new without having to worry about changing or losing the bevel on the blade.

So as long as you do not allow the tools to become overly dull, and as long as there are no chips or nicks in the blade, the leather strop will serve you well.

We recommend that you hone your tools on a regular basis; how often depends on how much you use your tools and the hardness of the wood you are cutting. A weekly schedule may suit your needs or you may do as I do and touch up your tools whenever they begin to feel a little dull...that's usually about the time that the wood begins to feel tougher and the sound of the blade going through the wood gets more scratchy. Place the tool on the leather, tilt it until the tip of the beveled edge is resting on the leather, and pull the tool *toward* you. Lift, place down, and repeat. Do not push the tool away

from you, as you might do on a whetstone, since this will gouge the leather. With u-gouges, turn the blade slightly from left to right and back again with each stroke, working all parts of the edge. Once you get the hang of it, since you do not have to worry about changing the bevel of the blade, you can hone your tools quite quickly. Twelve to twenty strokes usually does the job.

A word of caution: If you find yourself nicking the leather with the tools, you are holding that tool on too steep an angle. You need to pay more attention to the angle of the bevel of the blade, which in turn will help you use your whetstones properly when the need arises.

Honing compounds: While an abrasive is not absolutely necessary, we have found that using a fine grit honing compound brings up a sharp edge more quickly than using the leather by itself. Rub the compound hard into the leather until a bright green layer has been applied, then hone the tool as described above.



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