

HOW TO PREVENT DAMAGED OR BROKEN TOOLS

Wood carving tools can be damaged or broken. This is very rarely, if ever, the fault of the tool itself. Inexperience or carving habits acquired from using low quality or dull tools are the cause. We want to help you avoid these disappointments in the future.

About McClain's Wood Carving Tools

The tools we sell are handmade in Japan by master craftsmen famous for making the very finest carving tools available. The blades are hand forged from two types of steel. The tip or cutting edge is very hard, high-carbon steel capable of holding a sharp edge for a long time. However high-carbon steel is brittle, so it is laminated to softer, lower carbon steel which flexes and supports the hard steel. If you look very closely at the bevel, you can usually see a faint line where the two layers of steel have been forged together.

This double-layer construction creates blades that are strong, quick to sharpen (compared to western tools, which are made steel that is hardened throughout) and hold an exceptionally sharp edge; while still being thin enough to feel responsive as you are carving. Try carving with a western-made thick steel chisel or u-gouge and you will feel the difference immediately.

The drawback to thinner blades is that they can be chipped or broken if they are not used properly. The smallest sizes are especially vulnerable to breaking because there just isn't a lot of metal there.

How Tools are Damaged

The most common reasons are:



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- carving with a dull blade.
- trying to make too deep a cut in one stroke.
- levering the tip up when the blade is stuck.
- rocking the tool from side to side to push it through the wood.
- using the wrong size blade for the job.
- carving with fast, hard, aggressive motions.

Preventing Damage

You can avoid problems by:

- keeping the edge of the tool sharp. Hone it often while you are carving and sharpen it when it gets dull. You can return tools to McClain's for professional sharpening in Japan.
- feeling for the correct angle before beginning to take a cut. The angle of the tool should never be greater than the angle of the bevel on the cutting edge of the tool, about 30°.
- making shallow cuts, especially when you first start using a new tool. If you need to make a deep cut, work your way down with several strokes, removing the wood gradually.
- using the right size blade for the job. The blade should never be buried more than half its height into the wood.
- backing the tool out and taking a more shallow cut if the blade jams in the wood.
- cutting down the handle on Namisei and Josei tools so they fit your hand correctly.
- easing up and taking your time. If you want to make very bold, aggressive strokes, use a western tool.

Because McClain's believes everyone deserves a second chance, our policy is to replace one damaged tool for free. We only do this once, because frankly, it isn't the tool's fault.

We hope these tips help you enjoy using your Japanese tools for many years to come.

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