

INCISE CARVING TECHNIQUES

*The instructions given in this handout assume the carver is right-handed.
If you are left-handed, reverse the directions.*

Safety Rules

Observe these rules and tips when carving:

- Keep the free hand behind the cutting edge.
- Clamp your work down on a bench or table whenever possible.
- It is not advisable to carve in your lap.
- The cutting edge of a carving tool should be protected when not in use.
- Never get up from your bench or seat with a knife in your hand.
- Wear protection on the nail and ball of your right thumb. Wrap a band-aid around the middle joint of the right index finger to prevent the formation of blisters.

Basic Hand Holds

The knife handle can be used comfortably by keeping the right index finger on top of the handle and bringing the rest of the hand including the thumb firmly down on the wood (see figure 1).

NOTES

See the
Whittling in the Round Techniques
handout for additional information

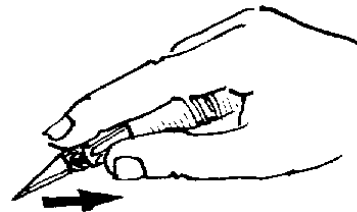


Figure 1

A simple variation of this hold is to also bring the index finger underneath the handle. This action in both cases is slicing and is still referred to as the **basic cut** (see figure 2)

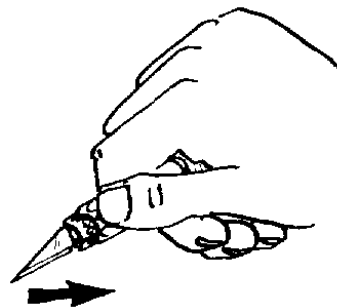


Figure 2

Techniques employed in using chisels and gouges are by pushing action rather than a drawing or slicing action. The handle is again held in either of the two positions described above with the right index finger on top of the hand or resting underneath the handle.

Excellent control over a V-tool or a gouge can be maintained by placing the left hand on top of the wood, then placing the bottom of the gouge across the little finger, the remaining part of the right hand resting on top of the left hand. The strokes employed are at times short unlike the sweeping strokes used with knives (see figure 3).

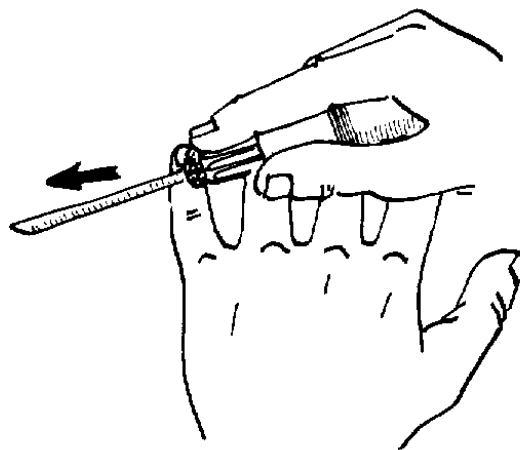


Figure 3

The Slicing Cut

Hold the handle of your knife like a pencil with the index finger resting on the blade about a half-inch from the point and slanting slightly backwards (see figure 4).

The heel of the hand rests on the wood surface and serves as a support, which gives good control throughout the slicing action. The **slicing cut** is the most fundamental of all knife incisions in wood. In most work, it precedes all the cuts

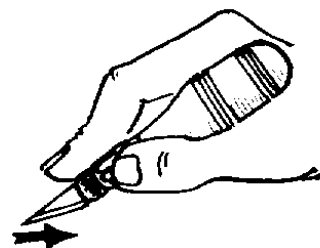


Figure 4
Slicing cut (Stop Cut)

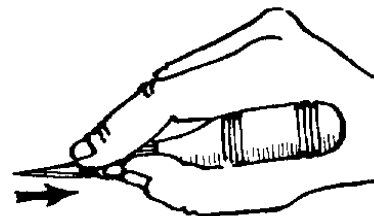
that follow. The slicing cut also serves as a **stop cut**, and must be made first before wood can be removed from either side of this incise.

The Angle-Slicing Cut

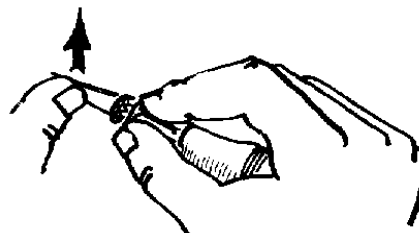
The **angle-slicing cut** is identical to the basic slicing cut with the exception that the knife blade is held at a 30 to 45 degree angle from the wood. When the angle cut is made against a stop cut, it results in a left stop cut "V" or a right stop "V" cut (see figure 5).

With the right hand holding the knife the angle cut can be made while the left thumb or the left index finger applies the pressure against the blade. In this manner the angle cut can be made with greater precision and maintained with excellent control. Long, even sweeping angle cuts will result and uneven jagged cuts will be eliminated.

These two important cuts are referred to as the left thumb supporting cut and the left index finger supporting cut (see figures 6 and 7).



*Figure 5
Angle-Slicing Cut*

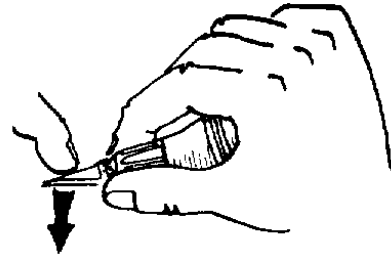


*Figure 6
Left Thumb Supporting Cut*



*Figure 7
Left Index Finger Supporting Cut*

The same kind of support can be given the basic cut with the right hand holding the knife while either the left thumb or the left index finger applies the pressure. This is referred to as the **bow knife cut** with cleaver action; it gives additional pressure at the blade tip. This cut is primarily used in an area where the grain of the wood proves to be unusually tough and resistant (see figure 8).



*Figure 8
Left Index Finger or Left Thumb
Applies Pressure*

Based on a handout by the National Carvers Museum and the Warren Tool Co., Inc., 1986

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