

TURNING A TOOL HANDLE

By Wayne Kuhn

Turning a handle for your gouges is a great way to refine your spindle turning techniques as well as save few dollars by buying your gouges unhandled.

This same technique is used for handles of screwdrivers, awls, and other tool handles.

It's very simple to do with some basic tools, techniques and a scroll chuck.

As with a lot of techniques and designs in wood turning, the final product will depend on your personal preference. This tutorial will guide you through turning a Robert Sorby style handle for a 1/2" bowl gouge. This process can easily be adapted to suit your style of handle and the size of the gouge.

My preference for wood is a straight grained hardwood such as the maple I'm using here. The weight of the handle is important to help with the balance of the finished tool.

My choice of ferrule is a brass flare nut readily available in a big box home center. I feel it provides sturdier support than copper couplings, is easy to mount and can be smoothed on the lathe with standard turning tools or just a mill file. Other materials could be used for the ferrule such as copper pipe, brass pipe, or steel pipe. The choice is yours; keep in mind this tutorial utilizes the brass flare nut so some steps can be omitted with other ferrule types.

Please keep in mind, there is more than one way to turn a tool handle, this is how I do it, and I feel the results speak for themselves.

Tools you will need

Spindle roughing gouge
Parting tool
Spindle gouge
Scroll chuck
Cone live center
Jacobs chuck
Drill bit to fit tool diameter
Center marking tool
Center punch
Tape Measure or rule
Calipers
Adjustable wrench

Materials needed

Handle blank, Ferrule, Epoxy, sandpaper, finish of your choice (optional.)

Warning Warning Warning

No safety warnings are mentioned or described with the attached drawings, tutorials or photos.

The user is expected to learn and practice all safety practices that apply to the various procedures described within before attempting to use any tools or equipment.

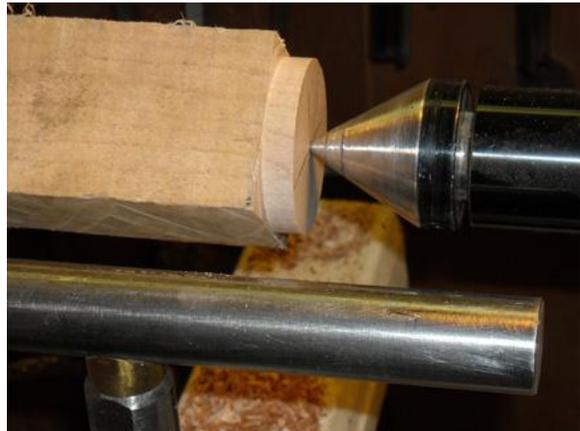
The author or Baltimore Area Turners accepts no liability for any injuries.



Start with a 2" x 2" blank approximately 2-3" longer than your finished handle. The blank does not have to be perfectly square, rough sawn works fine. Keep in mind the handle can be embellished by drilling a hole through it and gluing in a dowel of contrasting wood. The blank should be milled square for best results when drilling. Laminations should be minimal so you do not compromise the strength of the handle.



Mark the centers and center punch both ends.



Mount between centers and turn a tenon to fit your chuck. If the square blank fits your jaws this step can be omitted.



With the blank mounted in your chuck, remove the live center from the tailstock and insert a jacobs chuck with a drill bit sized to match the gouge diameter. Drill at least 2" deep.



After drilling the hole remove the Jacobs chuck, and insert a cone live center into the hole.



Turn a tenon the diameter and length of your ferrule. Err on the larger size and test fit. This can be tedious, however it is well worth the effort because a snug fit for the ferrule is important to maintain the integrity of the ferrule.



Insert the tool into the ferrule and insert tool into handle blank. Using an adjustable wrench, thread the ferrule onto the tenon. Inserting the tool ensures the ferrule will thread on straight

Option- If your lathe has spindle lock, lock the spindle and mount your ferrule between the tenon and your cone center. Thread the ferrule on with the adjustable wrench while advancing the cone center to keep things centered and true.



The ferrule should meet the blank without a gap.



Remount the blank with ferrule in place and turn it round to the largest diameter.



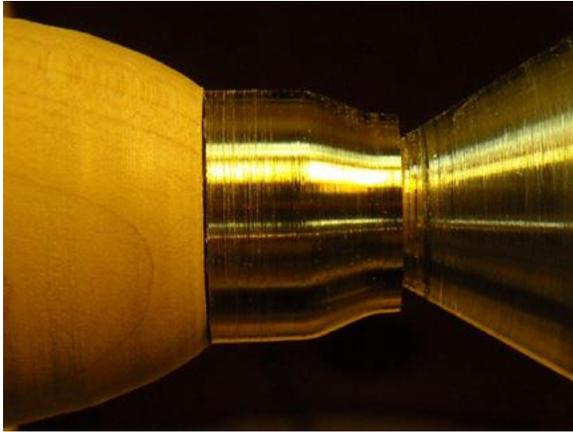
Mark the lateral distance to your largest diameter of your handle.



Using a spindle gouge, turn a large half bead to the outside diameter of the ferrule.



Optional step is to turn the hex off of the ferrule. This can be done with standard wood turning tools.



This is the ferrule after turning with a spindle gouge. It can be further polished with sandpaper.



Layout the other lateral dimensions.



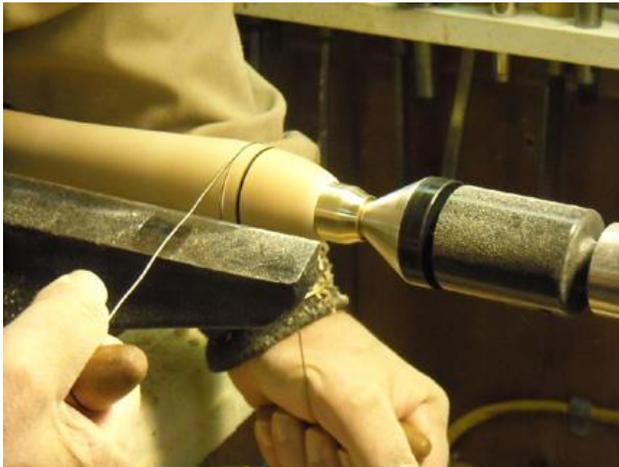
With a parting tool part down to final diameters.



Connect the dots, by connecting diameters.



Turning complete.



Grooves turned with the point of a skew and burned with a piece of steel wire.

At this point its time to sand, again personal preference prevails. There are two schools of thought here. First is to sand to a high grit and create a smooth finish with a high gloss as you would on a fine turning. The other is to leave the handle somewhat rough to provide a better grip. I fall in between and sand to about 400 grit and put on a friction polish. I figure it will get dinged up soon enough with use.



After sanding and finishing, part off the handle. Mix some epoxy and insert the tool into the handle. Wipe any epoxy squeeze out with a paper towel.



Should you have any questions, feel free to e-mail me at wmkuhn@verizon.net.

Have Fun,

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