

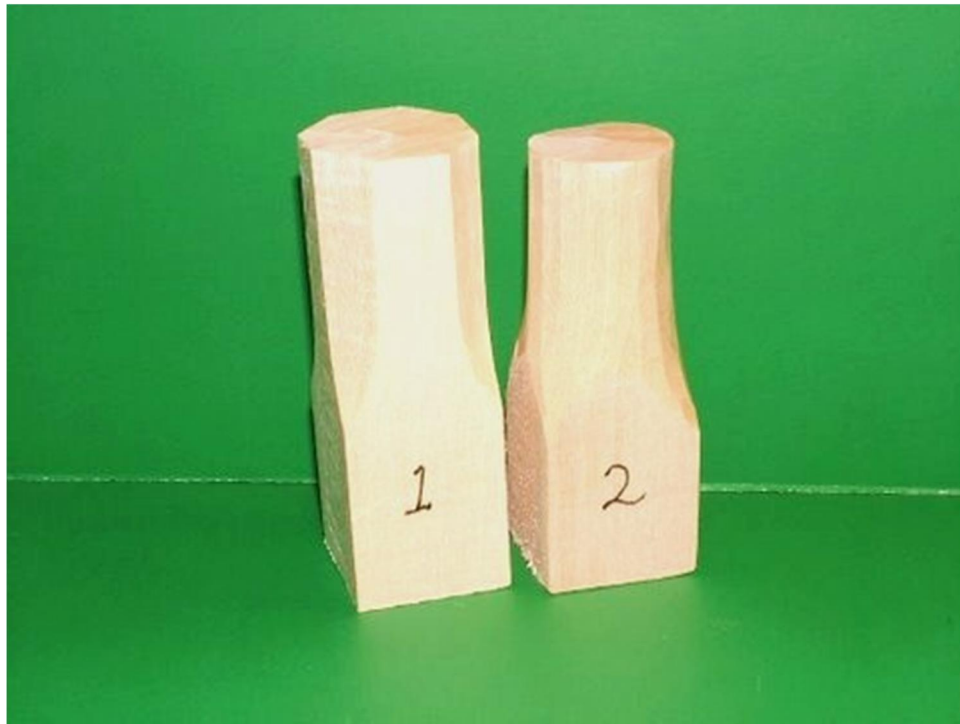
WHITTLING EXERCISES A-B-C's > 2

Whittling is the art of shaping a hand held piece of wood with a knife using various cutting strokes. The most efficient cut is a slicing cut since the cutting edge of the knife blade is made up of very small teeth very similar to saw teeth. Think of trying to cut a slice of bread. If the knife is laid across the loaf and pressure forces the blade straight down with a wedge cut, the bread will be cut eventually but will be squashed before the blade is forced through the bread. If, however, the knife is used in a slicing action allowing the cutting teeth of the blade to separate the fibers of the baked bread then a slice is possible with a smooth cut with little squashing of the bread. The same happens when whittling by using a slicing action allowing the cutting teeth of the blade to do what it is intended to do without forcing the blade into the wood. The key is to learn to develop a slicing action as often as possible to create clean and crisp cuts.

The Whittling A-B-C's are:

- A- Always cut with a slicing action.
- B- Be a slicer and not a prier.
- C- Cut with the cutting edge by slicing.

The exercises suggested are to practice the slicing cut while whittling, along with solving how to carve various shapes, angles and effects while producing recognizable objects.

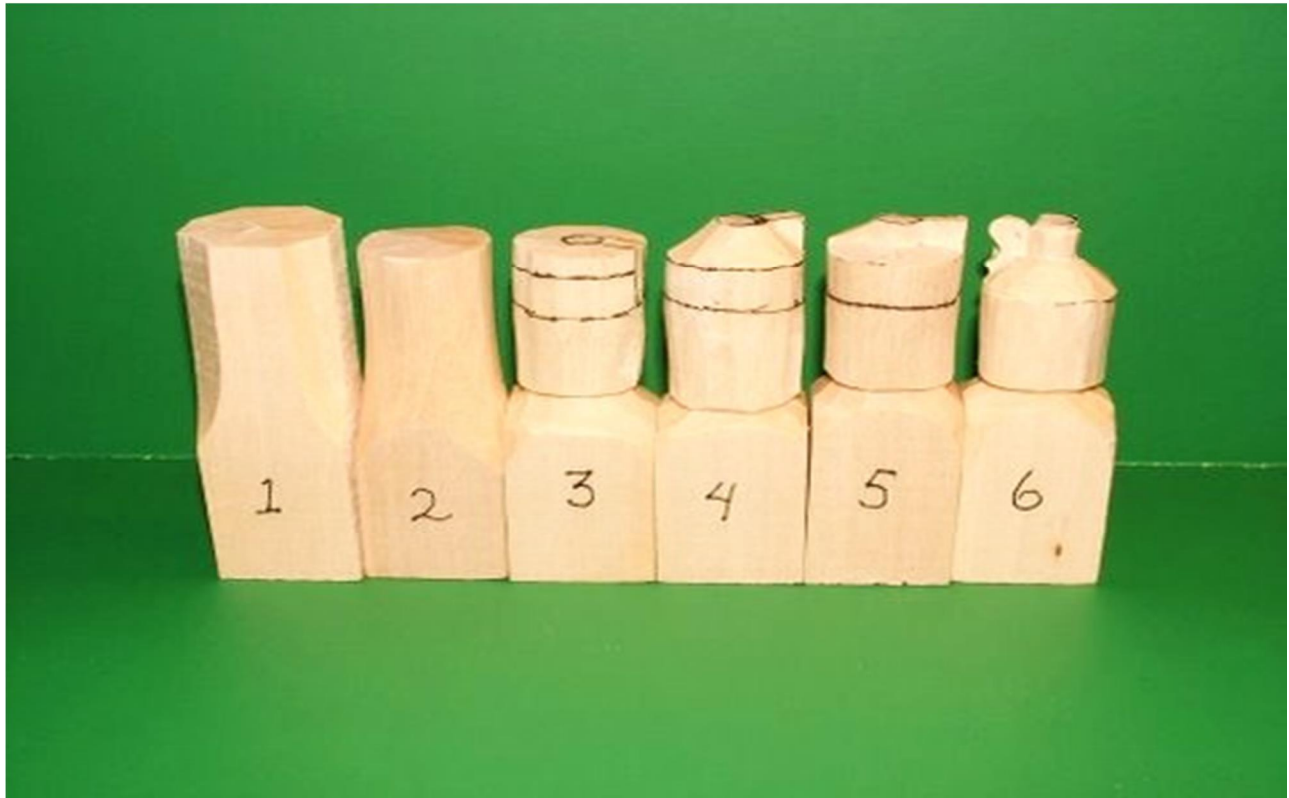


This exercise is to whittle a square piece of wood into a dowel or round rod shape. To carve something round that has square corners is to remove the corners as in the example in the photograph with a number (1) so that it begins to look from the top like a stop sign with its octagon shape. Continue to whittle with slicing cuts the square corners until there is a round rod or dowel shape as in illustration number (2). This is the beginning shape for carving two projects, the first being a hillbilly moonshine jug like the examples in the photograph below and the second, a Western coffee pot.



The larger jug in the blue background photograph was carved as a gift for Harold Enlow for his birthday. Incised into the side of the jug is the inscription: "Harold Enlow-Aged in the Ozarks- Since 10-13-39" with a hillbilly bottle stopper on top of the jug. The little jugs in front of the photograph are examples of the completion of this whittling exercise. The purpose of this exercise is to start with a dowel shaped rod recently whittled to shape and then whittle-carve the neck and handle of the jug and the angled roof of the jug and an opening in the handle and a cork in the neck opening. All of which are accomplished with slicing cuts in various directions.

The first thing to do is to draw a small circle on the top of the round rod-dowel shape to indicate the top of the neck of the jug. Next draw two parallel lines from one side of the circle to indicate the handle. On the side of the round rod-dowel shape draw a line all around the jug to indicate the height of the neck and then below that line draw another line around the jug to indicate the roof angled portion of the jug. The next photograph shows the complete sequence of steps 1 through 6 to give an idea from beginning to end.



Study number (3) to view how the various parts are drawn as a guideline for what to carve next. The first thing to do to open up the neck and handle is to make a slicing cut along the line of both sides of the handle cutting as deep as the first line and the neck circle as in the photograph with a knife with number (6) illustration.



Make a slicing cut at an angle to the stop cut made along the side lines of the handle between the neck circle and the first line all the way around as in illustration number (4). This sort of looks like sharpening a very fat pencil with a knife while leaving wood where the handle will be. This step is to partially remove waste wood in preparation for the next step of slicing across the end grain slicing gradually straight across towards what will be the bottom of the neck where it meets the *ōroofö* of the jug. When this cutting across the grain gets close to the round circle for the neck, slow down to wait till the whole area is smoothed over to the neck and then carefully slice down the side of the neck to have it fit up with the *ōroofö* of the jug.



The jug is now ready to have its õroofö whittled to shape. Once again cut along the sides of the handle as in the photograph with knife and number (6). Chamfer the top edge that is parallel with the bottom of the neck all the way around from one side of the handle to the other side of the handle. Continue to slice the õroofö so that it angles up from what was the second line to the bottom of the neck. Determine where the bottom of the jug will be and then score a stop cut around the bottom and then slice from underneath to the stop cut. Repeat this process several times, stop cut and then slicing up to the stop cut until there is a deep groove all around the bottom side of the jug. After the rest of the jug is whittled to shape, the jug can be separated from the block of wood with a small saw. The outer edge of the handle can be shaped and the opening of the handle begins with a small three cut triangle wedge removed. The triangle opening is whittled gradually a little larger being careful to always make slicing cuts without putting too much pressure on the knife blade cutting an opening. The cork in the neck is carved by scoring a stop cut around the neck slightly below its top and then slicing down to the stop cut at an angle which will give the appearance of a cork in the neck of the jug.



The next exercise project uses the same round rod-dowel shape to carve a Western style coffee pot that has a handle and a spout with tapered sides giving a good stretching exercise in whittling. In the photograph below the knife blade is shown on the back side of the handle indicating the tapering of the side of the coffee pot as well as the stop cut steps that will be used to outline both sides of the handle and both sides of the spout. After the side of the coffee pot between the handle and spout has been shaped, the spout presents a challenge in tapering its sides outward to where it meets the tapered side of the coffee pot. The spout when looked at upside down will resemble the shape of a human nose.





The illustration number (1) shows the top of the coffee pot drawn on the top of the beginning of the rounding of a rod-dowel shape. Number (2) and (3) show the progress while (4) and (5) show coffee pots near completion. The shaping of the lid knob is done by slicing across the grain stopping just short of the small circle and gradually making smooth, delicate slicing cuts to shape the knob. The lid is separated from the pot by scoring a stop cut around the bottom of the lid and making an angled scoring cut to the stop cut to form a groove. The handle is opened up with a three cut triangle wedge removed. This triangle or pie shaped wedge three cut process is a way to make a hole or an opening in many whittle-carving projects. It is like digging a hole in the ground with a shovel which requires at least three stabs of the shovel to remove a shovel full of dirt cleanly. This triangle or pie shaped wedge three cut process is a basic cut in chip carving and is used in face carving to open up and develop the eye structure, opening of mouth underneath a mustache, at the point where nose nostril, smile line and upper jaw converge, corners of mouth, opening in ear, nose nostril openings and any other area that needs a hole or a deepening of an area for the transition of two different levels or textures.

The jug and the coffee pot are good whittling exercises as are pineapples illustrated in the photograph above. To continue exercising on ones own, one could choose any common object to whittle for practice as well as creating a whittled novelty. Try whittling a shoe, a wrench, a baseball bat, a basketball with its seams, a golf ball with its dimples, a spoon or fork, a skillet or rolling pin, a broom or paint brush, a bottle or can, a dollar sign or a swan's neck, a coil of rope or a saddle bag, a rifle or a six gun in a holster, different styles of hats, feathers, bandanna around neck, hands on a walking stick or hands holding an object ó let imagination rule. Whatever is tried, always practice using the slicing cut and never try to force the blade into the wood. ***“Would be carvers would be carvers if they would carve wood.”***

The WOOD BEE CARVER – Donald K. Mertz, 729 Prairie Road, Wilmington, OH 45177

937-382-8287 www.woodbeecarver.com