



Beginners - Where to Start?!

CONGRATULATIONS!

Woodcarving is a terrific craft and also a journey and, like the beginning of every journey, it's wise to set off well.

And before you start, do read this short essay:

[About > Downloads > A Beginner's Perspective](#)

Written by Woodcarving Workshop's member, Justin Moon, who had never carved before he joined our site.

The Very Best Way to Begin Carving...

... is to take Our Beginners Woodcarving Course. You'll need to subscribe to Woodcarving Workshops - and that's a fantastic bargain because in addition to the course you'll have full access to the whole site, including all the other beginner videos mentioned in the notes below!

Our Beginners Course has 15 hours of video lessons in which Chris teaches you fundamental carving skills and takes you step by step to your first relief carving. Chris has written a course manual to download and you can probably complete the course in an intensive weekend. When you've finished, you'll have the confidence and competence to tackle lots of projects on Woodcarving Workshops.

[Find out more about Our Beginners Course here](#)

Other than that...

Here are some notes to help you get set up for woodcarving:

- Prepare your workplace
- Get some tools and equipment
- Learn a bit about sharpening
- Absorb basic information about wood.

We've selected some lessons from Woodcarving Workshops that cover these fundamentals and list them below.

Then it's a really good idea to:

- Practise some basic carving skills

Over time you'll see these crucial, basic techniques repeated continually through *all* the lessons on the website.

So we strongly suggest you work your way through the lessons we are listing below - total running time about 1.5 hours - and then you'll be in a great position to get going on your creative journey proper with some simple projects.

SETTING UP:

Work Area & Work Safety

1. Bench

You will need a work bench. It need not be big or fancy and can be just a strong table, but it does need to be well-constructed and heavy.

Watch: Videos > Techniques > Holding your Work > [BENCHES](#) (4:07)

2. Holding Your Work

Both your hands will be holding your tools so your work *must* be secured to your bench. The way you hold your carving varies with its size and shape. For beginning projects, inexpensive clamps and wooden 'fences' usually do well.

Watch:

Videos > Techniques > Holding your Work > [HOLDING RELIEF CARVINGS](#)
(3:37)

3. Safety

Carving tools are very sharp! And accidents will happen. So make sure you carve safely and have a first aid kit to hand.

Watch: Videos > Techniques > [SAFETY](#) (1:46)

Carving Tools

Confused by the overwhelming number of carving tools out there? These lessons will give you an overview of woodcarving tools:

Watch: Videos > Tools and Equipment > [TRUE GOUGES](#) (2:09)

[CHISELS & SKEWS](#) (2:24)

[ALLONGEE TO FISHTAIL](#) (2:59)

[V TOOLS](#) (2:45)

[SHEFFIELD LIST](#) (3:40)

Beginner's Tool List

Good carving tools are not cheap - though woodcarving as a whole is quite inexpensive compared with most other wood crafts. Woodcarving tools usually cost between £25-35 each (\$US45-55) from reputable makers and, if you look after them, they'll last a couple of lifetimes.

Carving tools are often available second hand! They might look old and rusty but usually they are perfectly usable. So, if you're a bargain hunter...

Watch: Videos > Tools and Equipment > [RESTORING RUSTY GOUGES](#) (5:51)

There are 4 projects that we recommend for all beginners (below) and you will need a total of 8 tools and a mallet to complete them. There is no need to buy any more to start with. Get familiar with these tools and then slowly grow your tool kit as you need to.

If you already have some carving tools that are fairly similar to the ones listed below, you should find they'll work for these projects, so give them a go before buying any more.

You can purchase this 7 Piece Basic Set of Auriou gouges as a set or individually from Classic Hand Tools and other links which you'll find below the video.

Gouges (Sheffield List):

1. # 3 x 1/4in. (6mm) - Pfeil Cut 2/6
2. # 3 x 1/2in. (14mm) - Pfeil Cut 2/14)
3. # 6 x 1/4in. (6mm) - Pfeil Cut 7/6)
4. # 6 x 1/2in. (14mm) - Pfeil Cut 7/4)
5. # 9 x 1/4in. (6mm) - Pfeil Cut 9/6)
6. # 9 x 1/2in. (14mm) - Pfeil Cut 9/14)

Other:

- V tool - 60 deg. x 1/4in. 10mm
- Skew Chisel - Double bevel x 3/8in. 10mm
- Mallet (20oz. 9kg)

Watch: Videos > Tools and Equipment > [AURIOU CARVING TOOLS](#) (1:34)

Videos > Tools and Equipment > Bench Tools > [MALLET 1](#) (7:29)

Sharpening

Sharpening your tools is not a mystery! It's just another skill. And, unless you plan to have someone else maintain your carving tools, you'll need to learn it! Here's a video to teach you how:

Watch: Videos > Sharpening > [NO FEAR SHARPENING 1 & 2](#) (23:00)

Wood

You'll need to find a source of wood to carve. Look to carving magazines and clubs, and search for local directories.

Never stint on the wood: There are 'good' carving woods and woods that will hinder much more than help you.

Understand your material: The wood you carve was once a tree, living and growing, and for better or worse, this makes each piece of wood unique. However, understanding how wood 'works' will avoid frustration.

Watch:

Videos > Carving Matters > Wood & Selection > [LOOKING AT WOOD](#) (3:04)

[INSIDE THE TREE](#) (3:28)

[WARPING](#) (4:17)

[WORKING WITH GRAIN](#) (2:20)

FUNDAMENTAL CARVING SKILLS

First Cuts

Learn to hold your tools properly and how to carve cleanly, right from the start. We've created a beginner's series: 10 short videos with simple exercises and projects to spotlight skills you must have. These lessons are bedrock. Watch them again and again...

Watch: Videos > Techniques > [THE GRIP SERIES](#) (30:00)

Videos > Techniques > Cutting to the Chase > [THE CUT OF THE CARVER](#) (3:25)

First Projects

We recommend you complete these 3 projects before trying more advanced carvings. They're fun in their own right but also work with basic skills, so do repeat them: you'll be much quicker a second time and drop all those mistakes you made first time around!

Watch: Videos > Surface Decoration > [THUMBNAILS](#) (20:00)

Videos > Relief Projects > [3 SIMPLE LEAVES](#) (49:00)

Videos > In the Round Projects > [APPLE](#) (37:29)

And Then?

Have a go at any project you find interesting, pushing yourself a little further each time. Even if you don't actually carve a project, you'll absorb a huge amount just by looking through it, studying Chris' approach and techniques. You'll find the same techniques repeated, rather like the same notes on a piano being made to produce a world of melodies. Don't ever feel intimidated. Carving should be satisfying and fun, and half of that comes from building up your skills and taking the carving journey in what Chris calls 'regular steps'.

Also, start thinking about your own ideas and what you want to carve.

Watch: Videos > Carving matters > [WHAT SHALL I CARVE?](#)

If you have a good idea that we haven't covered, let us know! And don't be afraid to ask questions and add comments under the lessons. We value all feedback and work hard to make this a great site for the learning and love of woodcarving.

Joy and success to your carving!

Carrie & Chris