

Finishing Touch For Wooden Bowls

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The biggest reason for a rough finish on a bowl is the wood grain. Twice a revolution you cut with the grain and twice a revolution you cut across the grain. The problem occurs on the cross grain cut. Because of the short grain, many times the wood fibers want to tear out rather than shear off. This is because the short grain doesn't receive as much support from the adjacent fibers as the long grain. Some woods are worse about this than others. Soft woods are usually worse than hardwoods.

As you reach the final shape, lighter cuts should be used.

Gouges should be kept sharp, as dull tools contribute to tear-out. No special grind is required on the gouge, use what you like.

After using the gouge, you will probably need to use a scraper. Scrapers should also be kept sharp and used with a light touch. This should produce shavings that are light and fluffy in most woods.

On some very contrary wood, the problem may be decreased by wetting the wood with mineral spirits. Or sometimes a small amount of the finish to be used can be applied and left until it dries. Or sometimes you can use thin CA glue. What works one time may not work another time.

When turning is completed, it is time to sand. I liked the way Mr. Robert Patin said it. "Turn as fast as you can, and sand as slow as you can." If you look at his work, you'll have to agree with him. Most of the time I turn and sand at the same speed. If turning thin walls, sanding at high lathe speeds may create too much heat and cause cracks.

Holding sand paper against the bowl while the lathe does all the work sometimes leaves ridges and uneven spots. The solution is "Random Orbit Sanding," but without using a random orbit sander. This is accomplished using sanding disks, a drill motor, and the lathe.

With the lathe running, a special sanding disk chucked in a portable drill is used to sand the bowl. There are several options that may be used to obtain the best finished surface.

1. Lathe speed may be changed.
2. Lathe direction may be reversed (on some lathes).
3. Drill speed may be changed (on some drills).
4. Drill direction may be reversed (on some drills).
5. There are different sized sanding disks available, 1", 2", and 3".
6. There are different grit sizes available.

After sanding to obtain the final surface desired, apply the finish material of choice.