

Project - Christmas Ornament

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Outline by Walt Wager

Video demonstration by Walt Wager

Nick Cook authored the article "Tis the Season, Again: Turning an Icicle Snowman" in The American Woodturner , 17.4:41-46. The article was republished in "Elements of Woodturning: Turning Holiday Ornaments", published by the American Association of Woodturners, in 2013.

This project is a great introduction to spindle turning. It has the new learner mount a spindle between centers, rough it to round, use a spindle gouge to turn the detail, use the spindle roughing gouge to taper the spindle, and sand the project and add embellishment to finish it. The Turning Holiday Ornaments book has many other projects that can follow on this one to give the new turner a chance to apply the new skills in a variety of projects.

I recommend that a mentor or instructor teaching the new learner consider reading the article, watching the video, and making an ornament before giving the task to a new learner. This will make preparation easier, and if the new learners watch the video first, they will have an advanced idea of what it is they will be doing. Some of the skills to be learned have been pulled from the article by Nick Cook in an outline form below.

Materials needed:

1" x 1" x 8" wood spindle blanks
150, 220 & 320 grit sandpaper
small drill for eye hooks
small eye hooks
sharpie or other marking pens
puff paint (optional)
Krylon clear finish (spray can)

Tools needed - Spur drive, live center

Spindle roughing gouge
3/8" or 1/4" spindle gouge
thin parting tool, box cutter, or thin saw

Procedure:

1. Mark the centers of the wood spindle blanks by drawing a diagonal line between corners
2. Mount the blank between centers on the lathe
 - a. Tap the spur drive into one end of the blank
 - b. bring up the tail stock, so the live center meets the other end of the blank in the center
 - c. tighten the tail sock quill to secure the blank - snug but not so tight as to split the wood.
3. Position the tool rest just below center
4. Adjust the lathe speed to approximately 3000 rpm
5. Rough the spindle to round using the spindle roughing gouge
 - a. Apply the Anchor, Bevel, Cut (ABC) rule when using the spindle roughing gouge. Start by resting (Anchoring) the gouge on the tool rest without touching the wood.

- b. Bevel - Lower the handle of the roughing gouge and rest the bevel on the spinning wood (it won't cut anything with just the bevel rubbing).
 - c. Cut - Raise the handle until the gouge starts cutting - keep it here and move it along the blank taking off the corners a little at a time.
- 6. Using the spindle gouge, start shaping the snowman's hat on the tail-stock side of the spindle.
 - a. Anchor the tool on the toolrest.
 - b. Rest the bevel of the spindle gouge on the wood
 - c. Make a cut from the tail-stock end of the spindle towards the top of the hat. This is a relief cut to give you room to shape the top of the hat.
 - d. Make a straight cut in to define the top of the hat
 - e. make a tapering cut toward the headstock to shape the hat, down to the brim.
 - f. define the brim by cutting straight in to the bottom of the cut you just made for the hat. Make the brim about 1/16th of an inch thick.
 - g. turn a bead for the head, starting at the widest diameter and rolling the spindle gouge toward the brim. Then roll the bead toward the body of the snowman (toward the headstock).
 - h. Define the shoulder of the snowman with a cut toward the head.
- 7. Taper the body the body using the spindle roughing gouge.
 - a. Anchor the tool on the tool rest
 - b. rub the bevel on the wood
 - c. bring up the handle to start the cut
 - d. taper the body of the snowman from the shoulder down to the foot
- 8. Roll a bead to define the foot of the snowman
 - a. use a pencil to define the width of the bead on the bottom
 - b. anchor the 3/8" spindle gouge on the tool rest
 - c. rest the bevel on the center of the bead
 - d. roll the bead to the left, then to the right - leave the thickness at the ends to 1/8" thick
- 9. Sanding -
 - a. Slow the lathe down to approximately 500 rpm
 - b. Start with 120 or 150 grit sand paper and sand the snowman, then use 220 grit.
 - c. Use the Sharpie to color the band on the hat.
- 10. Finishing -
 - a. Part-off the snowman from the tailstock side. You can use the 3/8" spindle gouge or a thin parting tool.
 - b. Cut off the stub from the bottom - (off the lathe)
 - c. Use the Sharpie to draw on the face and buttons or use puff paint (available at hobby shops)
 - d. Drill a small hole and screw in the eye hook
 - e. Finish with spay lacquer (like Krylon spray finish).

Make more to practice your skills.