

Wax Carving Tips *from Kate Wolf*

Wax carving requires exquisite detail and care—precisely carved waxes ensure that the final casting will require considerably less detailing. To make this task easier, we offer the following tips and tricks from Kate Wolf, owner of Wolf Designs and Wolf Tools in Portland, Maine (www.wolfwax.com and www.wolftools.biz). She recently launched a new line of waxes, Wolf Wax by Ferris, as well as a line of carving tools, Wolf's Precision Wax Carvers.

All Wrapped Up:

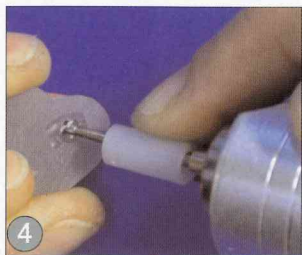
Creating a Kinder, Gentler Bench Pin

It's best not to rub a wax or finished piece of jewelry on a wooden bench pin imbedded with metal filings. Instead, I use a spare bench pin covered with bubble foam wrap—its cushiony surface is ideal for finishing up waxes, and it's also handy for final touch-ups on polished metal pieces. To create your

own, wrap a bench pin with double-stick tape [1], leaving some tape hanging off the end of the pin. (Although double-stick carpet tape is best, other tapes, such as cellophane, work well, too.)

Now wrap the pin in bubble foam [2] and trim to fit; the extra strip of tape will secure it tightly. After cutting out the V [3], put more tape in the seam.

You can also make bench pins wrapped with soft cotton cloth, moleskin (flannel with adhesive on the back—it can be found in drugstores), rubber (provides a great no-slip grip)—the sky's the limit! Try something new—Astroturf, anyone?



Cool Control: An Easier Way to Direct Your Bur

I like to ride my finger on the shaft of a bur for fine control, but after a few seconds my finger gets too hot. Now I let my finger ride on a nylon spacer [4]; it costs

about 15 cents and can be found in most hardware stores. The spacer slips easily on the shaft and lets me direct the bur and apply pressure as needed, without any discomfort.

Q-Tips: Applying Solvents and Polishing the Wax



To polish concave surfaces, I often use a Q-Tip with an orange oil-based wax solvent, such as WaxBrite or WaxKleen.

(Caution! Use all solvents with safety glasses and adequate ventilation!)

Break a Q-Tip and put it in a flex-shaft, with the cotton head close to the chuck.

Dip it in a tiny bit of WaxBrite or WaxKleen and spin at a slow speed to polish the wax [5]. Now, insert a dry Q-Tip in the flex-shaft and go over the surface again, wicking up all the solvent and giving the wax a final polish.

Here's how to make the world's smallest Q-Tip: Take a Q-Tip and pull the strands of cotton out. Spin a tiny ball bur in the flex-shaft, touch it to the cotton strands, and let it wrap around the bur [6]. This can be used on wax with or without solvent.



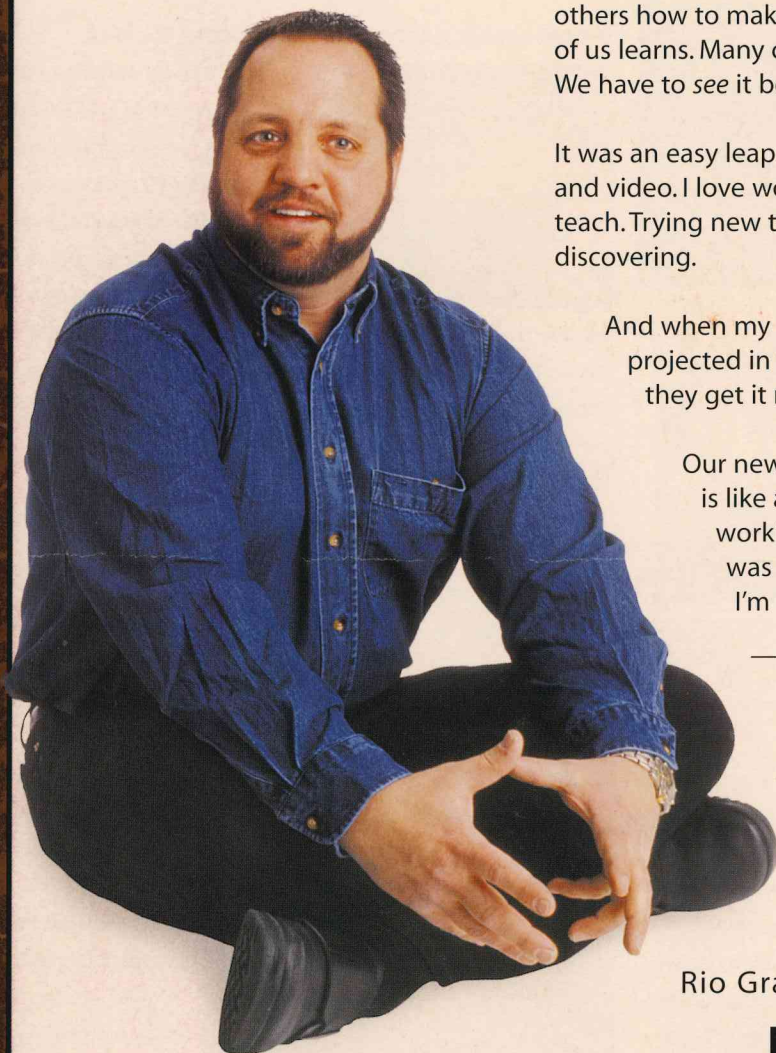
These tiny Q-Tips are also excellent on metal; they can apply polish in tight, normally inaccessible areas. To polish metal, make tiny Q-Tips and charge them with different cutting and polishing compounds.



Screening Technique: A Better Way to Sand Wax

Drywall screen—the abrasive sanding screen used to smooth plaster—is probably my favorite hardware store discovery: It is most excellent for sanding down the surfaces of carving

waxes, and it lasts for ages. Regular sandpaper clogs and is useless within a few sandings, but the holes in the drywall screen keep it from clogging up. Just put the screen on a flat surface and rub the carving wax on it [7] in a big figure-eight motion; this will evenly distribute the pressure. I usually move from a coarse (60 or 80 grit) to a finer (180 or 220 grit) screen.



I struggled in school, growing up. I had such a hard time learning the standard way—listen, take notes, study. I was better with my hands—holding things, seeing how they work, seeing how they're used.

When I got into jewelry-making and then into teaching others how to make jewelry, I saw how differently each of us learns. Many craftspeople, like me, learn visually. We have to *see* it before we *get* it.

It was an easy leap to high-magnification photography and video. I love working with cameras to show what I teach. Trying new things. Practicing, experimenting—discovering.

And when my students can see the techniques projected in front of them, larger than life, they get it much quicker.

Our new facility—state-of-the-art, brightly lit—is like a playland to me. After months of working there, I'm still as excited as I was the first day. I sometimes feel like I'm living this amazing dream ...

—and I'm just bursting with new ideas.

What will be the next jump
forward?

Rio Grande. Supporting your need to

leap.

Blaine Lewis

Blaine Lewis
instructor, hurdler, visionary
New Approach School for Jewelers
Virginia Beach, VA



phone 800.545.6566

www.riogrande.com

source code: ADAJM