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The care, use and tuning of your new jack/fore plane.

Warning: *Your new plane is a single iron plane. As such, there is nothing except a firmly set wedge to keep your plane's iron from falling through the mouth. Handling these planes, without the wedge firmly set, can be hazardous. Please set the plane's iron while holding it over your bench; preferably not over material for an important project. Please explain this and supervise children or other users who may not be aware of the risks of single iron planes.*

Sharpening

The iron supplied with your plane is sharp and ready for use. It is suggested that you accustom yourself to the plane with the iron as supplied before making changes to its edge.

Your sharpening stones (or what ever sharpening medium) must be flat. Once the face of the iron (often referred to as the back) is flat, it's best to only use your finer stones to remove any burr left from honing the iron's bevel. This will help limit enlarging the shaving aperture by keeping the iron near it's original thickness. Stropping can be done, but it is important to avoid rounding the front edge of the iron. Felt buffing wheels tend to round or dub the surfaces that form the edge.

The iron of your jack, or fore, plane has been provided with a cutting edge whose camber has a radius of about twelve inches. This is consistent with the usual intended usage for either of these planes, but we suggest that people adjust the camber to suit their personal preference. While doing so, keep in mind that the iron also slightly narrows, widthwise, from the cutting edge to the heel. This needs to be kept in mind if you wish to keep the cutting edge symmetrical.

In general, we recommend that people learn to sharpen without the use of honing guides. In part, because, sooner or later, most will encounter sharpening tasks which will not allow their use. Indeed, in the case of the noticeably cambered cutting edge of your jack, or fore, plane, most honing guides will be of little use. This is also true for sharpening methods which rely on "stroke counting." Finally, similar considerations come into play when, after considerable use, your jack, or fore, plane iron may need to be reground.

Setting

The adjusting and setting of wooden planes is one of their most mysterious aspects to woodworkers unaccustomed to their use. For this reason, it seems worthwhile to take a moment to, hopefully, shed a little light on the subject. Becoming fully comfortable with this process takes a little practice, but is well worth the effort.

In brief, adjusting and setting wooden of wooden planes can be boiled down to Newton's second and third laws of motion. In other words, relating to inertia and action/reaction.

We suggest you use a small (6 to 8 oz.) brass hammer or plastic faced mallet to increase your plane's depth of cut. This can be accomplished with light taps to the heel of the iron. Steel hammers will eventually mushroom the heel of the iron. When the final setting is reached, apply a final tap to set the wedge with a mallet. It shouldn't take a lot of force to hold the iron in place. The plastic faced mallet can also be used to lessen the depth of cut. A light tap on top of the toe section (where the strike button is located) will back the iron off. And the the wedge will need to be reset as before. I.e., each time the depth of cut is changed the wedge needs to be reset.

Remove the iron or set the wedge with a wooden, hard plastic or dead-blow mallet. These softer mallets will limit long term marring of your plane. A sharp rap, with your mallet, to the heel will release wedge pressure. A tone change will indicate the release of pressure.

Use

Traditionally, the jack/fore was the initial plane used in stock preparation of rough-sawn material. The cambered cutting edge of the iron allows for relatively thick shavings to be taken without the "corners" catching, or digging in. The result, of course, is that the majority of the cutting takes place toward the middle of the cutting edge. For this reason, the cutting edge tends to dull more quickly in this middle region than toward the edges, and it is tempting to concentrate on this area while sharpening. This is fine if one wishes to reduce the amount of camber, but if the user wishes to retain the original camber, they can do so by sharpening the entire edge even though the outer areas may not be dull.

The depth of cut can best be determined through experience. Essentially, while using your jack/fore plane for initial "roughing" work, the goal is to take as thick a shaving as possible without necessitating undue effort. You can work longer and get more done if you don't have to expend maximum effort on each stroke. For those unfamiliar with the use of jack/fore planes, a common mistake is to set the plane for too heavy a cut when first starting to remove the saw marks and the shavings are discontinuous. Once the plane begins taking continuous shavings, they will suddenly find that it is taking too much effort to complete a stroke. The solution is to simply back the iron off a bit, and subsequent experience will guide the user in setting the iron for this use in the future. A straight edge and/or winding sticks are helpful in judging progress, but one sign that it may be time to switch to a trying plane is when the jack/fore plane is taking continuous shavings over the entire surface.

Tuning

Seasonal or occasional tuning may be necessary. You may also have to do an initial tuning after your plane acclimates to the humidity level of your shop. It is suggested that you allow your new plane to acclimate to your shop's environment before making any gross changes to the sole; two or three weeks should be enough. Another high quality plane, set very fine, can do this or you can sand sole irregularities with fine sandpaper attached to thick (1/4" or more) plate glass. You should never have to use paper more coarse than 320 grit and we suggest you start with 400 or 600 grit. Care should be used to remove as little as possible and still get the sole flat. The wedge should be set to a normal working tightness with the iron withdrawn above cutting position when tuning or lapping the sole.

Maintenance

The finish on your plane is Min-wax Antique Oil finish. It should be compatible with other high quality finishing oils. It's a good idea to coat the sole with fresh finish after tuning and to maintain the finish in worn spots. After applying finish we suggest buffing with fine steel wool and waxing with a high quality wax such as Tre-Wax.

Storage

We suggest removing the iron for long term storage. We also suggest relieving pressure on the wedge if the plane isn't going to be used for a day or two.