

Phil's Ten Commandments of Turning

1. **Above all, be safe, and next, have fun!**
2. **Tune up your lathe.**
3. **Keep your tools sharp and accurately ground.**
4. **Ride the bevel, but with little pressure.**
5. **Push right up the handle of the tool.**
6. **Use your whole body.**
7. **Swing the tool and your body.**
8. **Use a shearing cut.**
9. **Move from larger chips to smaller for a fine finish.**
10. **Take your time to define the shape.**



Be safe above all things, and next, have fun!

C-1 Above all, be safe, and next, have fun!

- Always wear eye protection, better yet, full face mask
- Protect your lungs by controlling dust with face mask or full powered helmet
- No loose clothing or hair
- Mount wood carefully. Use tailstock when possible
- Start slowly and increase the speed
- Step back out of firing line when you start the wood
- Listen for unusual sounds. Stop and check them out
- Tired, frustrated? Take a break and come back to it.
- Enjoy yourself. Loosen your grip. Laugh at yourself and try again.

C-2 Tune Up Your Lathe

- Lathe spindle at elbow height.
- Smooth your tool rest and grind corners off your tool edge.
- Add weight to keep down the vibration. Make sure you have slow enough speeds.
- Always be aware of sounds and vibration in your lathe. Stop and fix it.

C-3 Keep your tools sharp and accurately ground.

- Buy the best tools you can afford. HSS at least, higher grade steels if you turn a lot.
- Sharpen often, because heat and wear will round over the tool edge and two things will happen- the edge will no longer cut cleanly and the rounded edge will change the bevel angle and not allow you to take a controlled cut at the same angle.
- Hone for maximum sharpness, especially skews and gouges on finish cuts.
- Grind for sharpness and geometry. Do not round over
- Use a jig if necessary to get a consistent grind.
- White, pink or blue wheel are best. Dress regularly to true the wheel and remove glazing.
- Use a jig if necessary to get a consistent grind. I like One-way style; can be shop made.

C-4 Ride the bevel, but with little pressure.

- "Ride the bevel;" that is, keep the ground edge of the tool riding on the wood.
- This is a subtle touch that steers the tool but with little pressure.
- This will control the size of the chip and help keep you from a catch.
- A catch usually results when the bevel is lifted off the wood and the edge is on its own, so you take a larger chip that you can control, even with the leverage of your handle.
- Too much pressure can bruise the wood beneath the surface or deform a thin section.

- If the wood begins to chatter (a high pitched vibration), you will need to adjust the pressure on the tailstock, take lighter cuts, use a steady rest, or use your hand to support the work. A leather glove can sometimes make this less heated.

C-5 Push right up the handle of the tool.

- This is advice I have not read elsewhere, but seems to be part of the secret of experience and fast turning. Of the vectors of force, (on bevel, against rest, along rest) the force right up the handle yields fast turning without bad side effects.

C-6 Use your whole body as much as possible.

- Tuck in your elbows and snug your body together for support.
- Stand with feet a shoulder's width apart, ready to balance your whole movement.
- Hold the tool at the ferrule, not at the end of the tool. Instead use your legs or hips to support the end of the handle.

C-7 Swing the tool and your body.

- Smooth flowing curves are the essence of good woodturning design. This comes largely from good technique and moving your feet/swinging your body.
- Good turning takes good footwork.
- Especially on spindle details, like coves and beads, you will need to swing the gouge's handle a long way. This is a challenge for most.
- Don't you wish you'd worked more at your dancing?

C-8 Use a shearing cut.

- A shearing cut means the cutting edge is meeting the wood at an skewed (not square) angle, usually 45 degrees or more, and will nearly always yield a finer finish.
- Shear scraping the inside or outside of bowls improves the finish and cuts sanding.

C-9 Move from larger chips to smaller for a fine finish.

- You can cut faster when roughing but need to take care when nearing the final shape.
- On bowls, this generally means roughing, finish cutting, shear scraping, and then sanding, from coarser to finer grits, to keep moving to smaller and smaller chips/scratches.
- For cleanest cutting on a bowl (uphill against the grain), you try to cut a smaller chip that will have less strength to break off into the wood. So for a finishing cut... use a smaller tool, probably the ¼ inch gouge, use a skewed cutting angle, increase the lathe speed, move the tool more slowly as you cut, keep your body rigid with elbows tucked in and the tool against your side, and use the near-vertical position.

C-10 Take your time to define the shape.

- Finally, the beauty that lasts is the shape, so take the time to get it right.
- Smooth flowing curves that don't have flat spots are usually preferable. That curve is alive and doesn't die out.

C-1 Above all, be safe, and next, have fun!