

Safety First – It's a Spindle Roughing Gouge (Gary Guenther)

Short and sweet: There is no such thing as a “roughing gouge”.

There is a tool whose proper name is a “spindle roughing gouge”.

A lot of emphasis has been placed on this fully correct name in the last couple years (and for good reason) because people might on occasion mistakenly use this tool for roughing cross-grain work like bowls. WRONG!

Spindle roughing gouges are meant only for turning a piece of wood in spindle orientation – that means the grain of the wood runs parallel with the ways of the lathe. There are several reasons for this. One is that if you use it to turn cross-grain, you're going to have a catch. Two is that when you have a catch, the tang is probably going to break, and the steel will go flying in some direction you weren't planning on, at a high rate of speed. Three, regardless of whether the tang breaks or not, there will probably be blood involved. If you want to rough a bowl, that's what a 5/8" bowl gouge is for.

To prove the point about the inadvisability of using a spindle roughing gouge on a cross-grain blank, a practiced turner decided to show it in a video. He was even more successful than he planned, because his blood flowed freely. Then he went back and showed the reason. You can check it out here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOhHeyoZLaY

The bottom line is “Use the right tool for the right task”, and calling it by the right name is a good start.

