

Tennis ball jam chuck

If you're like me, you're always looking for a new way to hold a piece in the lathe. You probably make various *ad hoc* jam chucks out of wood, PVC, or other materials. Well here's a new one you may not have seen. Use a tennis ball! You can use a tennis ball on either end, the head stock or the tail stock, depending on what you're trying to accomplish.

If you have a goblet or other open-mouthed piece chucked up in the head stock and want some extra support on the tail stock end, just use a cup-and-point live center and stick the point into the tennis ball. It will center easily into your work piece.

[Image: 92B chucked up] I recently turned a 7" trumpet-shaped, end-grain, natural-edge bowl from some storm-damaged Bradford pear and needed a jam chuck to finish the foot. A tennis ball fit the size and shape of the interior hollow perfectly and made good contact with my 2" chuck jaws (1-3/4" to 2-1/2"). I chose to use my usual thin foam insert between the wood and the jam chuck to protect the finish at the contact point, but I suspect, in this case, this may have been unnecessary. You tell me when you try it. (Does the high-visibility yellow-green color come off?) Safety note: I moved the chuck jaws to their fully-closed position before I set the ball into place. This may be unnecessary, but otherwise, I suppose there is potential for the rotation of the chuck to cause the jaws to close quickly, and they could jam shut (a new definition of a jam chuck).

Give it a try. What better use for used tennis balls?

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*Always use common sense. Things that work in one situation may not work in another.
 Follow all Safety Rules. If it feels wrong, it probably is; stop and rethink.
 Your **Mileage May Vary***