Your Mileage May Vary (Gary Guenther) Tips Hints Ideas Tricks

5/16" (8 mm) straight-nose, round skew for use as a negative-rake scraper

In the great scheme of things, a new tool is a small pleasure, but, hey, we'll take 'em where we can get 'em. In his recent demo for us, Richard Findley showed us how he uses a small, straightacross, round skew as a negative-rake scraper to cut a 90° mortise in a small box lid without the square corners of a rectangular bar hitting the wood on a relatively tight curve and pushing the cutting edge away from the corner. Good idea, Ollie. Sure, I need one of those! I have a ¼" round skew made by Bob Rosand (he sold them here when he demoed for us), but I use that as my tenon-refining tool, so I don't want to regrind it, and it's a bit small for this, so I obviously needed to make one.

I had long ago purchased a set of cheap Chinese punches with softish plastic handles to use for making small turning tools, and I had a 5/16" size remaining. Perfect! It's an easy thing to grind, once, maybe, but regrinding it to precision, repeatedly, could be frustrating and waste metal, and it's already short enough! Richard, pro that he is, sharpens his by hand and eye, but I prefer to use a jig. That, too, is easy to make -- and quick and simple to use. My punch is held in its handle by a 15/32" diameter collet that sticks out of the front of the handle by nearly 3/8". That is perfect for holding it in a wooden jig. I just drilled out a piece of very-hard scrap wood (the grain looks like hickory, but it's probably an exotic) on the lathe for a tight fit – happily, 15/32" matches one of my pen drills. I pre-ground much of the bevel steel away with 60 grit by hand and eye first and then refined the final shape in the jig by holding it on the grinder platform set to my chosen angle. That's your choice – I went for an included angle of 44° (22° on each side) because that's what Richard mentioned, and this tool could thus also be used as a skew, should the right application come along. I marked both sides of the tool and jig precisely for indexing while sharpening. I also coded the sides of the tool and jig in red and green, both for use in the jig and for use at the lathe, so I can see quickly which side the burnished grinder burr is on. (Richard uses the bar of any handy gouge for hand burnishing the edge to accentuate and strengthen the burr into a decent, lasting hook.)

Honestly, it almost took me longer to do the photography than it did to make the tool and jig. I look forward to using it.



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 **M**ileage **M**ay **V**ary