

# Rick Urban Woodturner

Changing the way you think about wood... One piece at a time!

## Piercing for Mere Mortals

Tools, guidelines, and techniques to get started with piercing.

### Demonstration Companion Guide

Primary Audience: New to piercing.

Time: 1.5 to 2 hours.

Prerequisites: None.



## Objective.

The objective of this demo is to help you get started with piercing, including techniques that begin on the lathe to create an appropriate canvas for your aesthetic expression.

## Preparation.

The form to be used should be finished on the outside and ready for final hollowing.

## Introduction.

My process for piercing generally involves relatively small forms with a wall thickness of no more than 1/8 inch. I will illustrate one approach for doing so and discuss alternatives when applicable.

## Tools.

**Carvers.** There are many rotary carvers to choose from. I have several, and not all are good choices for piercing.

- Drill, (1500 rpm).
- Flex shaft (Master Carver, 30,000 rpm / 1/4" and 1/8" bits).
- Rotozip tool.
- Motor in hand piece (Dremel) 30,000 rpm / 1/8" and 3/32" bits).
- Micromotor (Master Carver Micro Pro, Marathon, 35,000+ rpm / 1/8" and 3/32" bits).
- Pneumatic (NSK Presto 350,000+ rpm / 1/16" bits)
- The micromotor is my "go to" carver for the kind of piercing I do.

**Bits.** There are lots of bits, but most are not useful for piercing, and I typically use only a few.

### ➤ Materials.

- Carbon Steel (avoid).
- High Speed Steel (ok).
- Carbide in various alloy choices (recommended).

### ➤ Styles.

- Single cut (more aggressive)
- Double cut (less aggressive)
- Diamond - very fine (for "sanding")

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### ➤ Shapes for starting and enlarging holes. (Vendor list on my website)

- Drill bits.
- Tapered.
- Dentist drills.
- Cylinder.

### Miscellaneous.

- Dust mask.
- Safety glasses.
- Something to cradle the work.
- Fan.
- Deburring and sanding.
  - Diamond bits.
  - Sanding mandrels.
  - Flap wheels.
  - Non woven abrasives (like Scotch Brite).

## Process.

- Start with a good form. **No amount of carving or piercing will make up for bad form!**
- Piercing begins on the lathe.
  - Wall thickness needs to be no more than 1/8" for micromotor piercing. (Note: This assumes there will be no relief carving.)
  - Consider drawing the whole design when the outside of the form is complete.
  - Determine where piercing will be and drill a hole or holes to gage wall thickness.
  - A crochet hook (purchased or home made) works well.
- Draw the major design.
  - Decide spacing, size, and general shape.
  - Consider precision required for what you have in mind.
  - Consider the appropriate randomness.
- Make the first plunge cuts.
- The carver is a "router."
  - Work against the direction of rotation.
  - Avoid touching the bit in two places at once.
  - Multiple light, controlled passes are better than one big uncontrolled pass.
- Enlarge the holes.
- Patterns. Many are similar to texture patterns achieved with carvers or burners.
  - Most patterns look better if made random which has to be learned. We tend to line things up, and when we don't do it perfectly it shows.
  - If you want to do a pattern like bricks and mortar you must be very precise. Any irregularities will stand out!

## Suggestions.

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- Start with a relatively small, open form to make it easy to produce a thin wall.
- Draw the whole pattern with a pencil to insure general uniformity of size, shape, and spacing.

For more information visit my website

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