

OLD STREET TOOL, Inc.

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The care, use and tuning of your new trying plane.

Warning: *Your new plane is a single iron plane. As such, there is nothing except a firmly set wedge to keep your plane's iron from falling through the mouth. Handling these planes without the wedge firmly set can be hazardous. Please set the plane's iron while holding it over your bench; preferably not over material for an important project. Please explain this and supervise children or other users who may not be aware of the risks of single iron planes.*

Sharpening

The iron supplied with your plane is sharp and ready for use. It is suggested that you accustom yourself to the plane with the iron as supplied before making changes to its edge.

Your sharpening stones (or what ever sharpening medium you use) must be flat. Once the face of the iron (often referred to as the back) is flat, it's best to use only your finer stones to remove any burr left from honing the iron's bevel. This will help limit enlarging the shaving aperture by keeping the iron near it's original thickness. Stropping can be done, but it is important to avoid rounding (dubbing) the face of the iron. Felt buffing wheels tend to round or dub the surfaces that form the edge.

The iron of your trying plane has been provided with a straight cutting edge, with the corners relieved to minimize their leaving signatures on the surface of the wood being planed. If you prefer a straight cutting edge on your trying plane iron, you should be able to sharpen it a number of times before it will need any additional attention. However, if you prefer a slight camber (a few thousandths at most) to the cutting edge of your trying plane iron, you can readily introduce that camber as you re-sharpen the first couple of times. This is easily accomplished using free-hand honing (i.e. without a honing guide), a skill which you will need to learn, in any event, as you encounter profiled cutting edges.

As you continue to use your trying plane and the bevel needs to be re-established by grinding, keep in mind that the iron tapers slightly, width-wise, from the cutting edge to the heel. Thus, gauging the orientation of the cutting edge by checking with a square from either side may be misleading. For this reason, you will probably benefit by making any changes to the orientation of the cutting edge based on gauging it from the sole of the plane with the iron centered up in the escapement as if for use.

Setting

The adjusting and setting of wooden planes is one of their most mysterious aspects to woodworkers unaccustomed to their use. For this reason, it seems worthwhile to take a moment to, hopefully, shed a little light on the subject. Becoming fully comfortable with this process takes a little practice, but is well worth the effort.

In brief, adjusting and setting of wooden planes can be boiled down to Newton's second and third laws of motion. Specifically, the laws relating to inertia and action/reaction.

We suggest you use a small (6 to 8 oz.) brass hammer or plastic faced mallet to increase your plane's depth of cut. This can be accomplished with light taps to the heel of the iron. Steel hammers will eventually mushroom the heel of the iron. When the final setting is reached, apply a final tap to set the wedge with a mallet. It shouldn't take a lot of force to hold the iron in place. The plastic faced mallet can also be used to lessen the depth of cut. A light tap on top of the toe section (where the strike button is located) will back the iron off. And the the wedge will need to be reset as before. I.e., each time the depth of cut is changed the wedge needs to be reset.

Remove the iron or set the wedge with a wooden, hard plastic or dead-blow mallet. These softer mallets will limit long term marring of your plane. A sharp rap, with your mallet, to the heel will release wedge pressure when removing the iron. A tone change will indicate the release of pressure.

Use

Traditionally, in the process of basic stock preparation, the trying (or long) plane was the second one used, following a jack or fore plane. As it's name implies, it is the plane used to true-up surfaces. In other words, it is the primary plane used to create a wood surface which is flat – i.e. straight in length, not cupped in width and not “in wind” (twisted) diagonally. Given this function, it is generally set to take a moderate shaving, the exact depth of cut depending on how hard the wood is as well as whether it is presenting any tear-out problems. In fact, if the wood is cooperative, a smoothing plane may not be needed at all during stock preparation.

The trying plane is used not only on the faces of boards, but to true-up the edges as well. Thus, it can be readily used to shoot edges for glue-ups, especially if the boards aren't particularly long. Its length (traditionally 20 to 24 inches) allows it to be very efficient for its intended use.

About the tote

Traditionally, woodworkers have used a three-finger grip when using toted planes, with the forefinger pointing forward and resting lightly on the side of the iron. Accordingly, the tote on your trying plane is sized for this traditional usage. This may feel a little unfamiliar if you have been accustomed to using a four finger grip, but we think you'll find that the more traditional approach will help you avoid adopting a tiring “death-grip” on the tote.

Tuning

Seasonal or occasional tuning may be necessary. You may also have to do an initial tuning after your plane acclimates to the humidity level of your shop. It is suggested that you allow your new plane to acclimate to your shop's environment before making any gross changes to the sole. Two or three weeks should be enough. Another high quality plane, set very fine, can do this or you can sand sole irregularities with fine sandpaper attached to thick (1/4" or more) plate glass. You should never have to use paper more coarse than 320 grit and we suggest you start with 400 or 600 grit. Care should be used to remove as little as possible and still get the sole flat. The wedge should be set to a normal working tightness with the iron withdrawn above cutting position when tuning or lapping the sole.

Maintenance

The finish on your plane is Min-wax Antique Oil finish used as a wiping varnish. It should be compatible with other high quality finishing oils. It's a good idea to coat the sole with fresh finish after tuning and to maintain the finish in worn spots. After applying finish we suggest buffing with fine steel wool and waxing with a high quality wax such as Tre-Wax.

Storage

We suggest removing the iron for long term storage. We also suggest relieving pressure on the wedge if the plane isn't going to be used for a day or two.