

Turning a Bowl

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Turning a bowl is a fun project that builds essential skills for turners. The bowl has been an integral part of human history. It's an object that is functional yet can be highly decorative. Within the simplicity of the form, there are still challenges to produce a well rounded profile, blended foot, and a smooth sanded finish. In woodturning, there are many variations of techniques for producing bowls including this one. Have fun with the bowl project!

Tools:

Faceshield

1/2" bowl gouge

Parting tool (optional)

Faceplate

Four jaw chuck

Screw Chuck (optional)

Sand paper

Start the bowl with a blank 6 to 9 inches in diameter and 3 inches thick. Be careful not to start with too large a bowl while learning techniques and tool control. Two methods of securing the wood blank for turning use either a faceplate or a screw chuck. This project was completed using the face plate method.



If possible, use green blanks to rough out the bowls. Schedule another turning session once the blanks have been dried.

TIP: When considering grain and any spalting figure, don't put the best features at the top of the bowl. Mount your wood blank so these features are shown off in the bottom.



With the blank mounted on the lathe, place the tool rest close to the wood. Rotate the lathe **BY HAND** before turning, checking for clearance between the wood and tool rest.

Using a ½ bowl gouge, true the blank round. The tailstock with a live center can be used to help steady the wood while truing it.

Shape the bottom of the bowl, concentrating on tool control and form. Include a spigot on the bottom to be held in the 4 jaw chuck for the next step. Be sure that the spigot is long enough, but won't bottom out in the 4 jaw chuck. A parting tool can be used to square up the spigot.



If you're turning dry wood and are going to finish the bowl in one session, glue on a waste block. Hold the waste block in place with the tailstock until the glue dries. True up the glue block. The glue block can either have a spigot turned for a chuck or a face plate can be attached

HINT: Use a pen to make a small dot at the very center of the spigot. This will aid centering a bowl once it has dried.



Remove the bowl from the face plate or screw chuck. Place the spigot in the 4 jaw chuck and tighten. The bowl should not bottom out inside the 4 jaw chuck. Turn the inside of the bowl, again practicing tool control. Periodically check that the inside of the bowl is following the outside profile. The inside will start to deviate a little as you get into the bottom of the bowl.

If you're turning a green bowl, leave the bowl about 1 inch thick for drying. Place the bowl in a paper grocery bag or coat with end grain sealer. Each mentor can help decide which process is best.

For bowls turned green and dried, make a jam type chuck for truing up the spigot. Use the dot on the spigot, marked during rough out for centering the tailstock live center. The tailstock will hold the bowl to the jam chuck while truing up the spigot. Attach a glue block. For finish turning the bowl, use either a faceplate or turn a spigot on the glue block for the 4 jaw chuck



TIP: To center a glue block on a dried bowl, turn a 3/8" small spigot on the bottom of the original spigot. Attach your waste block to your face plate or 4 jaw chuck and true up the face. Use a Jacobs chuck in the tail stock, drill a shallow 3/8" hole in the glue block. The glue block will now be centered when you attach it.

HINT: Make sure surfaces that you're gluing together are turned flat.

Once the bowl is successfully remounted on the lathe, rim facing away from the head stock, shape and sand the outside. Then turn the inside of the bowl to the desired thickness. Sand the inside of the bowl.



Use a parting tool to part the bowl from the glue block. Reverse the bowl and use the tailstock to hold it against the jam type chuck (from the previous step). Clean up and blend the bottom of the bowl and turn a foot if desired. Sand the bottom.

HINT: Turn the foot or bottom of the bowl slightly concave for better stability.

There will be a small nub to remove from where the tailstock was holding the bowl against the jam chuck. Use a small knife or gouge to remove it and sand the area.



There are many finishes available for your bowl, let the mentor help select a good finish for your bowl.