

Turning Tops

by Dave Bowers

Introduction:

Turning tops is a great way to introduce youth to turning. It's a project that starts laying the foundation of turning while providing immediate results. The top project is fun and as the students become more proficient, vary the designs and decorations to keep it interesting. Provide brightly colored markers and let the student be expressive.

Wood Blank:

2" x 2" x 5" maple blank. Other woods may be used but consider woods that have tight grain.

Tools:

Faceshield

½" Spindle gouge

Skew

Chatter tool (optional)

Four jaw chuck

Face plate with glue block (optional)

Colored markers

Sandpaper

Process:

Begin making tops by starting with 2" x 2" x 5" maple blanks.



Remember to always rub the bevel and cut down hill when turning spindle projects



Mount the blank in the four jaw chuck. Then, using your ½" spindle gouge, round the blank down to a cylinder. Be careful that you don't try to round the blank to close to the chuck jaws.

NOTE: If four jaw chucks are not available, faceplates with or without glue blocks can be used. If a glue block is used, shorten your blank accordingly.

Once the cylinder is formed, begin shaping the end (the tailstock side) to form the bottom. Keep the bottom gentle and smooth, always rubbing the bevel as you cut. Once this is finished, color and use the chatter tools as desired for decoration of the bottom.



Now it's time to start shaping the handle and define the top portion of the disk.

Finish forming the handle and disk. There is great design opportunity at this point for the shape of the handle, forming small beads and coves, if desired. Turn the handle down to approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ " , blending the handle with the disc. Maintaining a sharp tool and rubbing the bevel will help eliminate any sanding.



Any type of marker can be used. You'll find them at art supply stores, craft stores, or any store that sells school supplies. Have a variety of bright colors for decoration.

Complete your coloring of the top.
When you are finished coloring, slow
the lathe down and part off the top with
a skew, toe side down. Cradle the top
with the other hand to catch it while
parting off. The mentor should help
with this process.



Lightly sand the handle top, if required, with 220 grit to smooth it out. You're done with
the top – Enjoy!