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Sanding the Inside of a Turned Vessel

By Ellis Hein

Do you need to sand the interiors of your hollow vessels, but don't want to risk your fingers doing the job? Here's a simple solution from master turner Ellis Hein, author of [*Woodturning Projects to Set Your Mind Spinning*](#). It's a small shop-built sander that chucks into your 1/2" variable speed drill.

You'll need the following supplies and tools to complete the sander:

1/2" x 10" dowel rod (1)
1-1/2" x 4" plastic pipe (1)
#6 x 1/2" wood screw (1)

Hacksaw (or other fine kerf saw)
Countersink bit
1/2" electric drill
F file

Begin construction by cutting a 1" long slot in the end of the dowel. Turn the dowel 90 degrees and drill a pilot hole for a 1/2 in. x #6 wood screw. Note that this hole is perpendicular to the slot, and about 1/2" from the end of the dowel. Countersink for the screw head. (Figure 1).

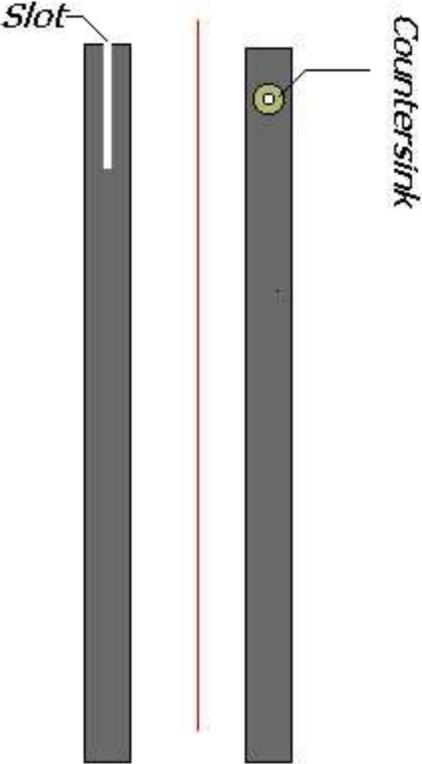


Figure 1

Cut an assortment of grits of cloth-backed sandpaper to size (1-1/4" x 8"). Fold the selected strip of sandpaper in half, to make it 4" long. (This will be a coarser grit to start with).

Slide the doubled strip into the slot in the end of the dowel, grit sides out, and position it so that equal amounts of paper protrude on either side of the dowel (Figure 2). Insert the #6 screw into the pilot hole and screw it through the sandpaper. If any of the screw protrudes beyond the backside, file or grind it flush.

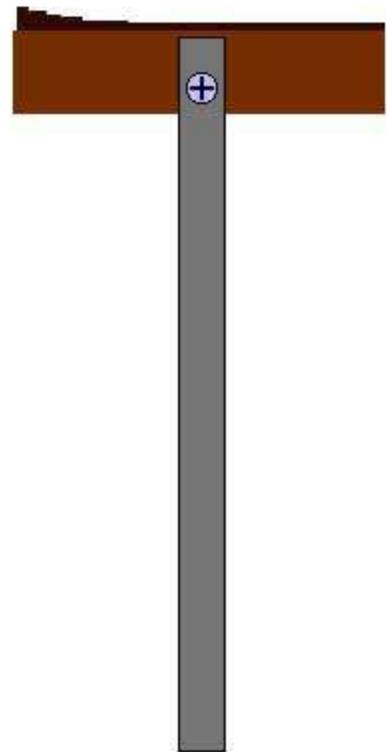


Figure 2

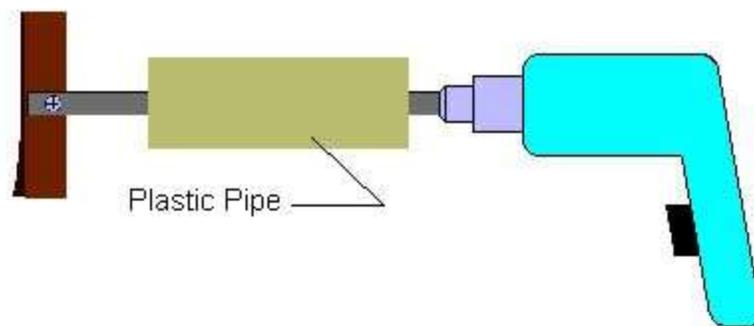


Figure 3

Slide the 1-1/2" plastic pipe onto the dowel. This is your handle, which will help you control the movement of the sanding head. Now, chuck the end of the dowel into a 1/2" drill, as shown in Figure 3, above. Roll the sandpaper around the dowel by turning the drill chuck forward while holding the sandpaper. (This way the sandpaper doesn't try to unroll itself when you run the drill.) Insert the business end of the jig into the vessel, switch on the lathe and pull the trigger on the drill.

The flapping sandpaper will cause some vibration, so I like to hold the drill with my right hand, while my left hand holds onto the plastic pipe to steady the dowel. Move the stick back and forth to sand evenly along the length of your turning.

The wood fibers of the dowel will be compressed by the drill chuck and will allow the dowel to loosen up over time. Stop the lathe and the drill often to tighten the chuck.

Changing grits or strips is simple. Remove the screw, pull out the old sanding strip and insert the new. If you ground off the point of the screw, use a bradawl or nail to reach through the pilot hole and punch a hole in the sanding strip. Then install the screw, tighten it and you're ready to go again!

Woodturning Projects to Set your Mind Spinning

Master woodturner Ellis Hein's e-book is a downloadable electronic book which walks the reader through several beginner and intermediate skill turning projects.

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