

## You need a cabinet scraper

IT'S THE BEST TOOL FOR CLEANING UP TEAROUT BEFORE FINAL SMOOTHING. HERE'S HOW TO SET IT UP PERFECTLY

BY PHILIP C. LOWE

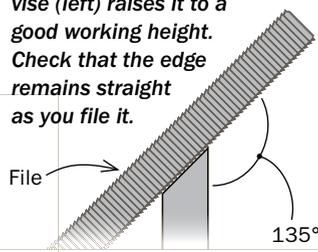


### 1. File and hone the bevel

A good hook starts with fresh steel and a polished bevel. Repeat this process every time you turn the hook, as using the scraper hardens the edge too much to allow you to re-turn it.



**File the edge.** Use a 10-in. mill bastard file to expose fresh steel. Clamping the blade in a hand screw clamped in your bench vise (left) raises it to a good working height. Check that the edge remains straight as you file it.



**Hone the bevel freehand.** The blade is too big for a guide. To maintain the bevel angle, lock your elbows against your body and rock your legs forward and back.

**U**nlike the more familiar card scraper, the cabinet scraper is not made to leave a finished surface. Instead, it's a rougher tool, used to remove tearout and machining marks created by the jointer and planer and tracks left by handplanes before you begin final surface preparations with sandpaper and a card scraper.

It's a bit of a quirky tool. Although the blade looks like a card scraper and cuts with a hook, it's a bit thicker and mounted in a body similar to that of a spokeshave. But the sole is larger than a spokeshave's. This bigger sole prevents you from creating a divot—which can happen with a card scraper if you concentrate too much on any one spot—because it forces you to work a larger area of the surface.

A cabinet scraper does a great job if set up properly. I'll show you how to sharpen the blade and how to set it to take nice shavings. I'll also give you a few tips for using it and for correcting some common problems.

### Hook the blade

Although the cabinet scraper's blade is beveled ( $45^\circ$ ), it actually cuts with a hook turned onto the cutting edge.

After filing the bevel to expose fresh steel, hone the bevel and polish the back on your sharpening stones. I work my way through four grits—1,000, 5,000, 8,000, and 16,000—but you could use



**Don't forget the back.** Polish it to the same level that you polish the bevel. Lowe works the bevel and back before moving to the next stone.

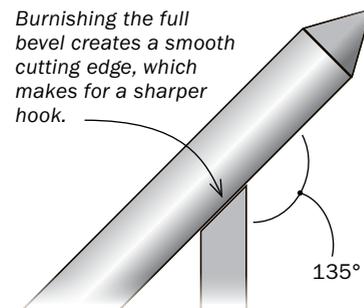
## 2. Roll the hook

Get a strong hook by forming it slowly, rolling it a bit more with each stroke.



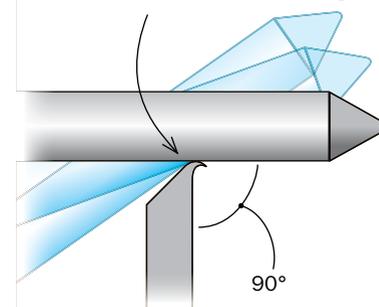
**Burnish the entire bevel.** Take several strokes back and forth across the bevel to flatten any scratches that might remain after honing.

Burnishing the full bevel creates a smooth cutting edge, which makes for a sharper hook.



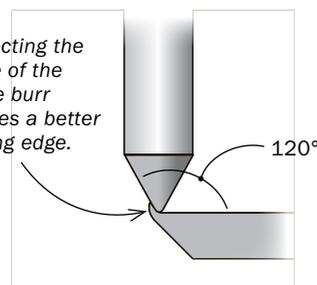
**Work the hook.** Take several strokes, raising the burnisher  $5^\circ$  to  $10^\circ$  with each stroke, taking the final stroke with the burnisher  $90^\circ$  to the blade.

Raising the angle of the burnisher with each pass actually rolls the hook, rather than simply pushing it down. That makes the hook stronger.



**Now fine-tune the hook's angle.** It's fairly easy to roll the hook too far or to roll it at an inconsistent angle. To fix this, you need a burnisher with a pointed tip. Run the tip along the hook, which brings it to a consistent  $120^\circ$  angle, perfect for scraping.

Correcting the angle of the entire burr creates a better cutting edge.

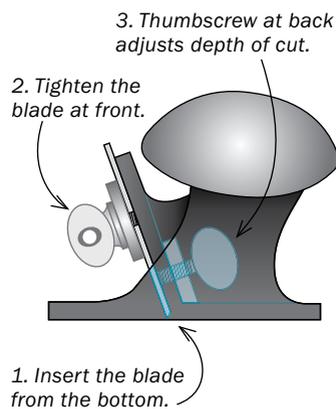


## 3. Set up for fluffy shavings

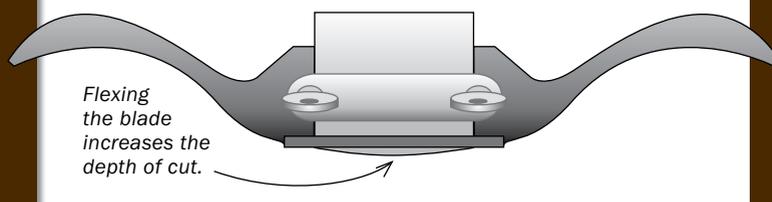
Insert the blade into the scraper body from beneath, with the hook facing toward the clamping bar.



**Clamp the blade in place.** With the scraper on your bench, press down on the blade so it's bottoming out on the bench. Tighten both screws evenly.



**Set the depth of cut.** Turning the thumbscrew clockwise flexes the blade and increases the depth of cut. However, the greater the blade's flex, the narrower the cut, so go easy and take wide, fluffy shavings unless the tearout or machine marks are deep.



similar grits and just go through 8,000.

Now you can turn the hook. Hold the burnisher at 45° and burnish the bevel to remove and flatten out any remaining scratches. Next, take several strokes along the cutting edge, raising the burnisher with each stroke until it is square to the blade.

After turning the hook, I lay the blade flat on my bench with the hook facing up and run the tip of my burnisher along the hook. The tip is shaped like a cone, and adjusts the hook to a consistent angle, improving its cutting ability (You can buy a burnisher like this from Lowe for \$65 at [furnituremakingclasses.com](http://furnituremakingclasses.com)).

The blade is ready to cut shavings now, so put it back in. Tighten the clamping bar, and set the cut depth with the thumbscrew.

### Scrape before cutting parts to size

As you scrape, apply even downward pressure with both hands and be sure not to scrape more from one area than others. Also, hold the tool at a slight angle to prevent the blade from grabbing and catching, especially near the corners. I push the scraper, but it can be pulled.

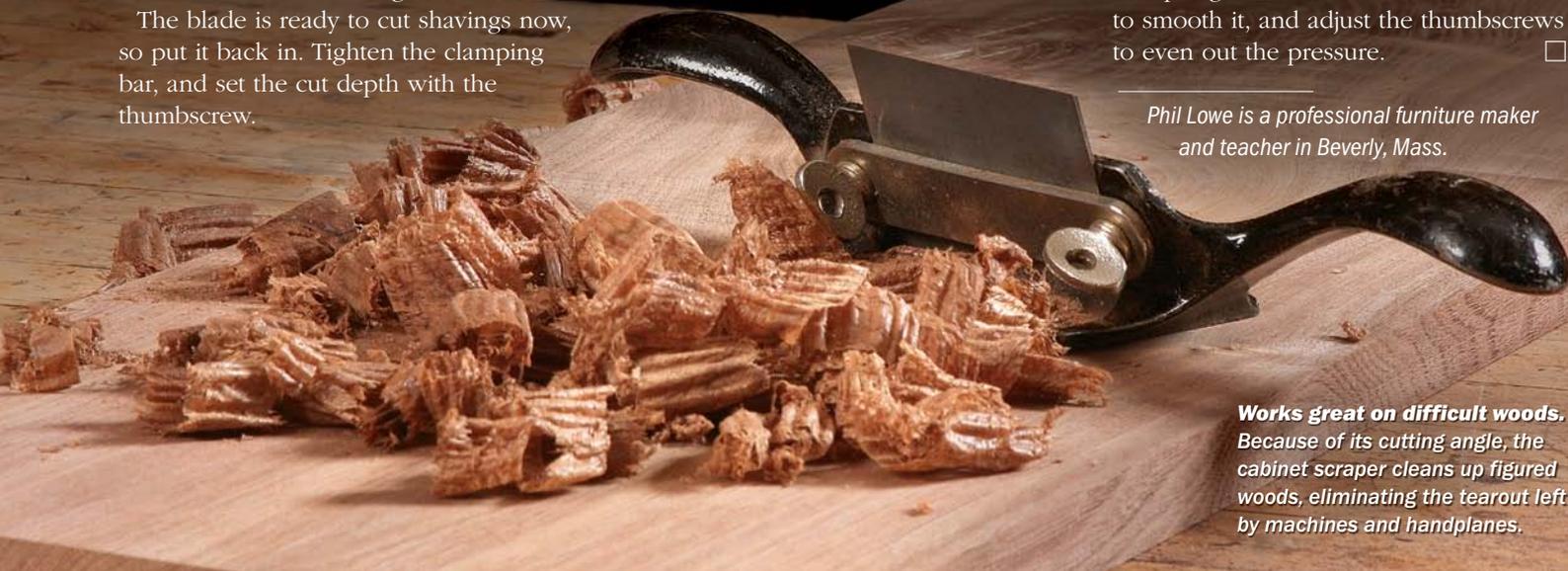
Work from the ends in toward the center, because if you scrape down the length of the part, there is a good chance the blade will catch at the far end, leaving a crease that is difficult to remove. You'll end up scraping against the grain on part of the board, which

will lift the grain and leave a rougher surface than scraping with the grain. But that's OK. The cabinet scraper isn't meant to produce a finished surface and you'll be smoothing afterward.

However, because the plane's sole doesn't get a lot of support at the start of the cut, you might not get a great surface there. To avoid this problem, scrape parts before you cut them to their final dimensions. You can cut away any bad surfaces around the ends afterward.

Blade chatter can be caused by uneven pressure from the clamping bar or roughness on the surface of the bar that clamps against the blade. Use a mill file to smooth it, and adjust the thumbscrews to even out the pressure. □

*Phil Lowe is a professional furniture maker and teacher in Beverly, Mass.*



**Works great on difficult woods.** Because of its cutting angle, the cabinet scraper cleans up figured woods, eliminating the tearout left by machines and handplanes.

