



Making Small Scrapers

Old tool steel, especially from throwaway dovetail saws, is a great raw material for scrapers

by William Tandy Young

There's nothing like a thin scraper for leveling a coat of lacquer or varnish, for easing an edge or for bringing a delicate inlay flush with its surroundings. I especially like scrapers that are small and thin. I can use them in tight corners with one hand if I have to. And small scrapers are much less likely to damage delicate details because they're easier to control than standard scrapers. Best of all, these invaluable scrapers are easy to make from pieces of good steel that find their way into my scrap-metal drawer.

I've made scrapers from old Sawzall blades and pieces of wide bandsaw blade, but old handsaws are one of the best sources of thin steel. When the teeth get dull on an ordinary \$10 dovetail saw, I don't bother sharpening it. It's just not worth it. Instead, I recycle the parts and buy a new saw. I tap off the handle and remove the back from the old saw. The handle gets fitted to some other tool, the back gets tossed in the scrap-metal drawer and the blade gets made into scrapers, as shown in the photos at right.

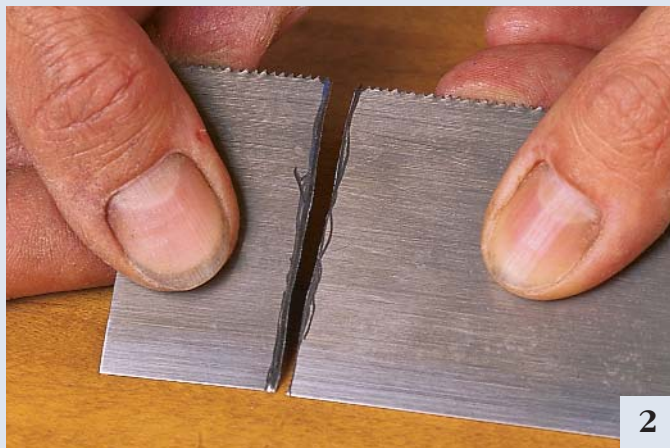
Full-sized (2½ in. by 5 in. or 6 in.) thin scrapers, both rectangular and curved, are also available from Garrett Wade (161 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10213-0459; 800-221-2942). I prefer .40mm (about .015 in.) scrapers; they're half as thick as a standard Sandvik.

You can use these store-bought thin scrapers without alteration, but I usually chop them down just like the old dovetail saw. I find that thinner steel works better in smaller sizes. A thin scraper that's full size tends to flex too much during vigorous use, especially if you push rather than pull it. □

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Making a scraper from a sawblade

1. Score the sawblade with a Dremel tool or die grinder fitted with a grinding wheel. The grinding wheels are available from most hardware stores. Score both sides until the piece can be bent. If you don't have a Dremel tool, an electric drill probably would work as well.

2. Bend tip back and forth until blade breaks off.

3. File off scored edge and teeth. File the edge square to the scraper's sides.

4. Hone sides and edges. Work from your coarsest stone through a medium-grit stone. A quick, light burnishing with a piece of hard steel readies the scraper.