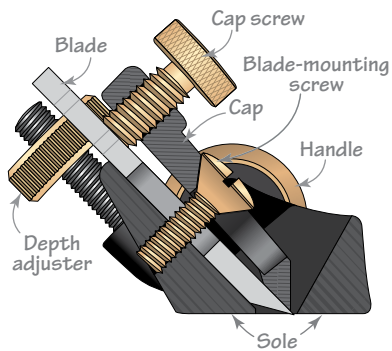


Shape Wood *Fast* with a Spokeshave

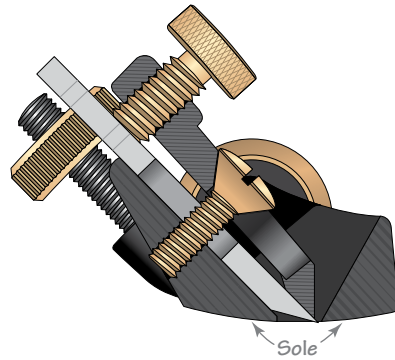


Three typical spokeshaves in two body styles

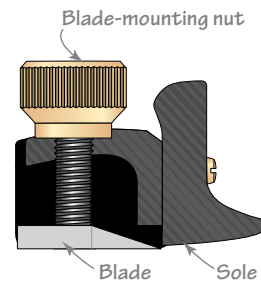
Standard angle, flat sole
(Cross-section view)



Standard angle, rounded sole
(Cross-section view)



Low angle, slightly rounded sole
(Cross-section view)



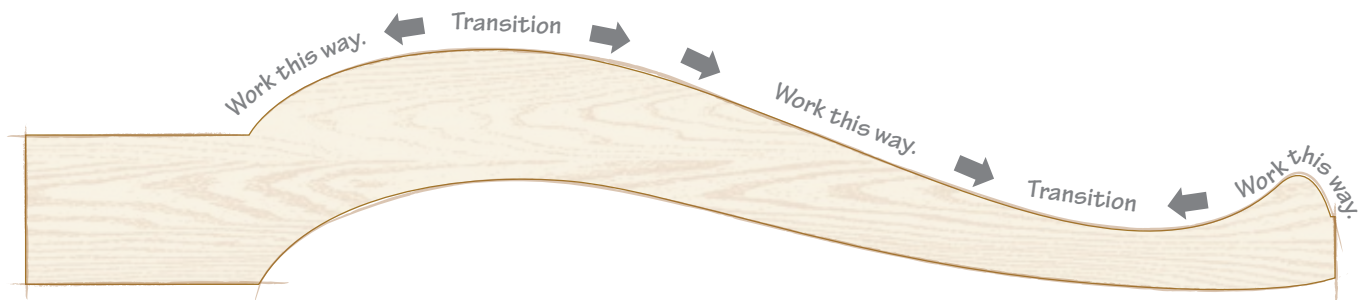
In the same way a carrot peeler slices away the vegetable's irregular surface, a spokeshave removes ribbons of wood from curvy project parts, such as cabriole legs, turned spindles, and arched table aprons. Essentially a short plane with winglike handles, a spokeshave has a 2–3"-wide blade and a sole to register against the wood. Additionally, this centuries-old tool rounds over edges and cuts clean chamfers faster than you can set up a router to do the same job.

The three most common types of spokeshaves, shown in the illustrations above, vary by blade angle and the shapes of their soles. A standard-angle spokeshave with a

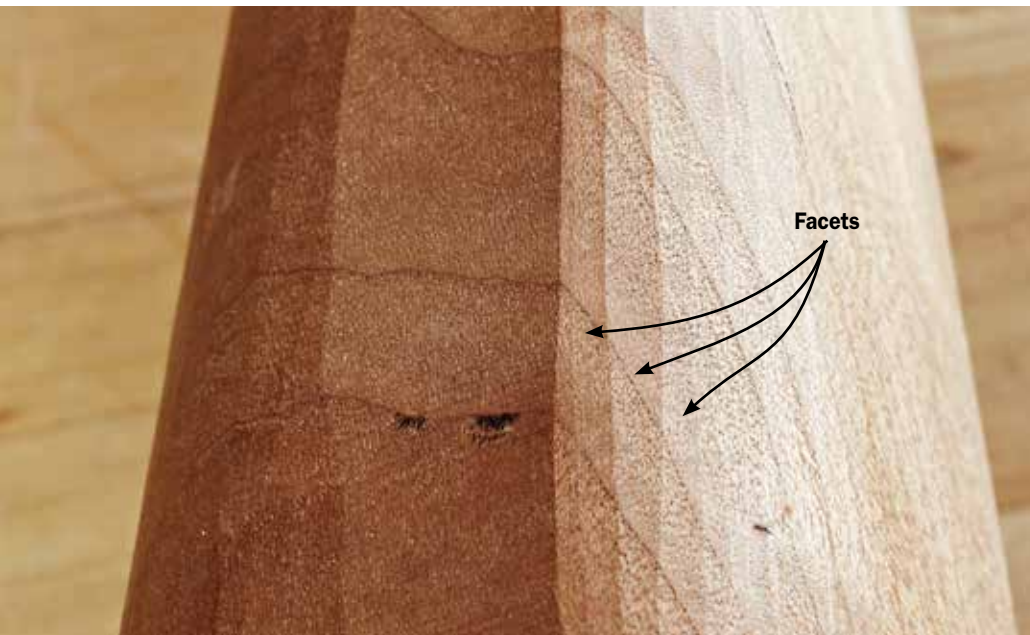
flat sole in front of and behind the blade excels at shaping narrow, flat surfaces and outside curves. A standard-angle shave with a rounded sole works better for inside curves. A low-angle shave has only a slightly rounded front sole and works best on tight inside curves and end grain.

How to “shave” wood

When you're ready to shape wood with a spokeshave, such as finessing a cabriole leg's contours, begin by “reading” the wood grain to determine the best directions for making cuts. (See illustration below.) Secure your workpiece on a benchtop using a face vise or



Cut with the grain to avoid lifting and tearing it. Always work “downhill” of the grain to prevent tear-out. Identify the transition areas where grain changes direction or flattens out. As you approach a transition, lift the shave gradually and exit the cut. Do the same from the opposite direction, and then *lightly* pare away the transition to blend, using alternating strokes from each direction. If you get tear-out, switch to rasps and files to even out the transitions.



Clean up cut marks after the shave. Each stroke you make with a spokeshave leaves a narrow, linear facet along the workpiece edge. For a cleaner look, scrape or sand these areas smooth after you've finished the shaping process.

tail vise and bench dogs. If you don't have those, a pipe or bar clamp secured in a vise holds workpieces just as well.

Gripping a spokeshave by the ends of the handles gives you greater leverage for deep cuts, but choking up on the handles near the blade, as shown *page 24*, and *right*, helps you better control the cut. A sharp spokeshave cuts effectively with either a push stroke (cutting edge pointed away from your body) or pull (pointed toward your body). Get comfortable with both methods so you can quickly adjust to changes in grain direction by flipping the tool without having to reposition the workpiece. Because low-angle

spokeshaves have single soles, you will develop a feel for "balancing" the tool to maintain a consistent cutting depth. Before tackling one of your project parts, practice in knot-free scrap wood to learn how each shave works.

Ideally, you'd own all three types of shaves (they sell new for about \$70–150 each) because each handles specific tasks better than the others. But if you can buy only one, get a standard-angle, flat-sole shave. When you're ready to add a second one, get a low-angle model. 🌲

Produced by **Bob Hunter** with **John Olson** and **Tom McLaughlin**



Pipe clamp secured in vise.

Give it a push on end grain. Gripping a low-angle shave near the blade, push the tool down and away for end-grain cuts, such as this cabriole-leg foot.

No-fuss sharpening

Spokeshave blades measure only about 1/8" thick and 1–2" long, so you can't hold them in a honing guide or freehand and expect good results. Instead, use the method shown *right*.

To sharpen a blade, guide it against a beveled block that matches the blade's bevel angle. Slide the blade side-to-side on the abrasive.



Sources

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