

## Engraving Tool Information

Engraving tools are made to carve hard surfaces, including end-grain wood, Resingrave®, plastic or metal. They are not designed to carve soft materials like linoleum, plank wood or plywood.

To avoid damaging your tools, store them so they do not hit against each other. A fabric roll-up works well. McClain's offers canvas tool carriers for storing and transporting tools.

Keep the tools sharp. Cutting with a dull tool is difficult so one is tempted to force, twist or rock the tool. These actions put stress on the blade in a manner it was not designed to endure and it can break. It can also chip Resingrave.

Engraving tools come from the manufacturer "factory sharpened," which means they are given a basic shape but they need to be sharpened before you begin any projects.

The trick to sharpening engraving tools is to hold the tool at an exact angle on the stone, with no play at all from side-to-side as you move the tool back and forth. This is almost impossible to do just holding the tool with your fingers, so we recommend using a Crocker Sharpener, which is actually a sharpening jig. It holds the tool at a constant angle and prevents rocking as the tool is sharpened. The result is a tool with very sharp sides that will glide through the material you are cutting. Photos and instructions for using a Crocker Sharpener can be found at [www.imclains.com/](http://www.imclains.com/)

[productinfo/documents/UsingACrockerSharpener.pdf](#) or in Richard Woodman's book, *Relief & Intaglio Printmaking Methods on Resingrave Blocks*.

Oil stones work well for sharpening these tools. You can use water stones, but the small face of an engraving tool will wear deep grooves into them quickly and the stones will have to be replaced more frequently. For this reason, most engravers use the harder oil stones to sharpen these tools.

The round India Combination Stone McClain's carries has a coarse 150 grit side and a fine 400 grit side. The coarse side is great for repairs and removing metal quickly, while the fine side will put a very sharp edge back on the tool. To maintain the edge or give the tool face a polished, mirror-like finish, use the hard 1000+ grit Arkansas Natural Stone, quarried in the Ozarks.

Oil is used to lubricate and to flush metal filings off of the surface of the stone so the grit is exposed.

A magnifier or loupe is also essential, so you can really see what is happening to the sides of the tool as you sharpen it.

We hope these tips will help you keep your tools in great shape so they give you many years of enjoyable use.



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