

# St Louis Woodturners - Presentation on making tool handles

There are several reasons to make tool handles for your lathe tools.

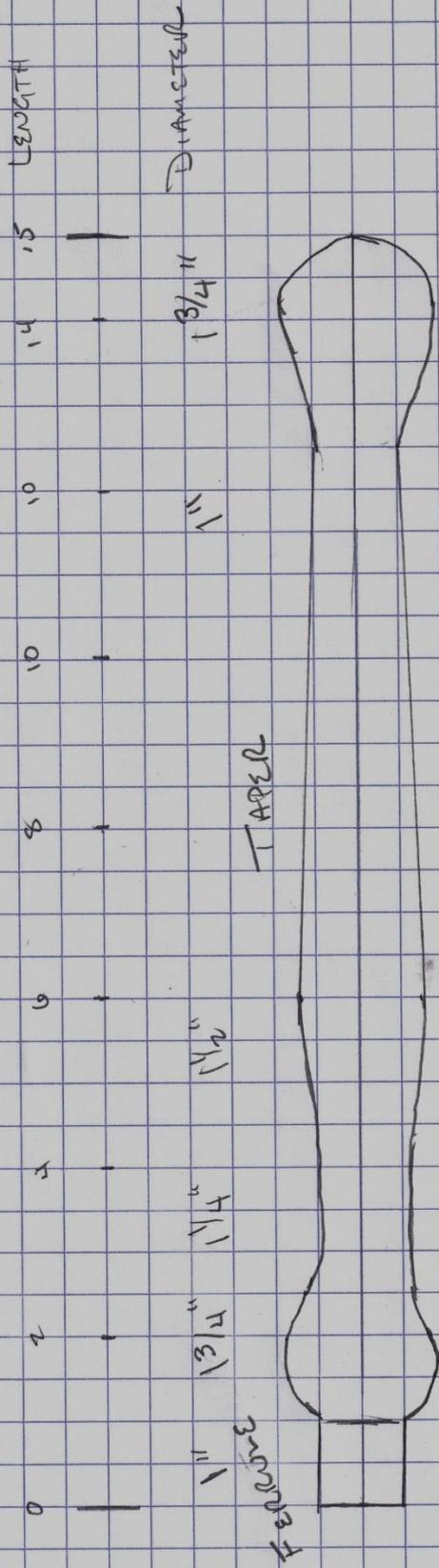
- Cost - The cost of commercial handles runs from 60 – 120 dollars each. Plus buying unhandled tools is less expensive. Plus HSS blanks are available from tool makers and even Amazon.
- Customization – By designing handles for your hands and the way you work you are more comfortable and secure at the lathe. You are also able to address specific, or unique, needs.

Styles of handles by method of tool holding:

- Epoxy the tool into the handle. Simple and inexpensive, but permanent. Not a great choice if you want a long handle on a tool that needs to swing around to be sharpened. For square tools the hole needs to be chiseled square and/or the tool corners need to be ground down, small wedges might be used.
- Insert with set screws. My favorite inserts are Hosaluk (Packard or Craft Supply) and Cindy Drozda, both are ~\$20. Cindy also has a video of making a simple handle. These do take a hex wrench, but a Curmudgeon doorknob makes tool change easy.
- Twist lock. The inserts get pricy (Clews ~\$65, Robust Kit \$120 - \$160). No tools needed to release a tool, just twist and bump.

Tool handle dimensions are whatever works best for you. Larger tools typically use larger handles, but the whole point of making your own handle is to fit your requirements. A tool blank would be 5" to 24" long and 1" to 2.5" square. The typical length on a ½" gouge handle is 12" to 16". A simple ferrule from copper pipe helps prevent splitting, use an inch or less. The depth of the tool inserted into the handle varies slightly. While I have seen tools inserted only 1" I feel that is inadequate as it gives the tool too much leverage. I use 1.5" as a minimum and up to a bit over 2".

The diameter of the handle, and any shaping or texturing, is up to you. For reference a Thompson handle is rounded with flat strips, diameter across the rounded sections is 1 3/8" and the flats are 1 ¼". Sorby handles are sculpted and vary from 1 1/8" to 1 ¾". If you have issues with rolling tools, then use multi-axis turning on the base side of the handle.



ALL DIMENSIONS ARE FOR ILLUSTRATION PURPOSES ONLY. YOU CAN BUILD A 7/8" DOWEL ROD IF THAT BETTER SUITS YOUR NEEDS.