

The roughing gouge, is the tool that most turners get introduced to first. They find that it is easy to develop confidence with this tool. With that confidence, this tool sometimes becomes overused and misapplied. To better explain where it's true use is, it would be better named the '**Spindle Roughing Gouge**'.

## Purpose

It would be better named the *spindle* roughing gouge purposely to indicate that this tool *is not* for use for roughing out bowls or any hollowing application! Too often, when wrongly used in a bowl roughing mode, the ramifications are snapped tools, work blown off the lathe and a very frightened turner. Never, ever, ever use the SRG on a bowl shape.

The primary purpose of the SRG is converting the square billet of a spindle job into a cylinder before moving onto the shaping cuts. However, is very useful for removing large amounts of waster and also for creating long shallow hollows or curves. Like most tools, it has a range of roles which increases as the turner's confidence in the tool increases.

## The Grind

The SRG is classically ground with a square shoulder at about 45 degrees so that it can be used to turn a spindle round right up to a pommel shoulder or other square apron. The tools can be rotated to use *all* the edge rather than re-sharpening frequently. **See photo 1.**

There are variants of the SRG, particularly the shallow channel variant. All are useful, it becomes a matter of personal preference as to which will appear in your toolkit and hands.

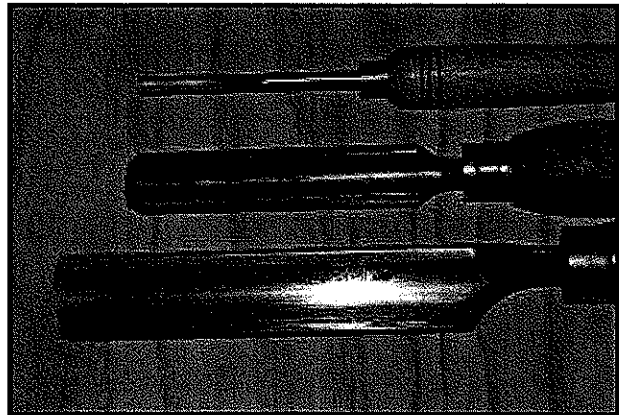
## Sizes

Tool size varies, with the most common size being the 25mm (1in). **See photo 2** for the SRGs in my workshop. They range from 30mm down to 6mm which is my primary pen shaping tool. I have also seen old bowl gouges with very little channel left, reground as SRG's as their shape is very similar.

The important issue is that like all other tools, you use the size that suits the job you are doing. Overall, I think that most people use too big an SRG as many times I have seen a 30mm tool being used on a small 12mm pen blank and often for the only reason that it is the only tool size that the turner has. We seem able to justify different tool sizes in spindle gouges, skewers, bowl gouges and scrapers but seem reluctant to purchase a smaller SRG.

## How To Use

- Place the tool just off 90 degrees to the work.
- Rotate the tool about 20 degrees so that the cutting point is just off centre.
- Hold the handle against your body for security and steadiness.
- Keep the handle low enough so that your point is higher than your handle. This ensures a shearing cut rather than a scrape will occur.
- Cut at or just above centre height, so your tool rest will normally be just below centre height.
- Rather than push your hands along the tool rest, shift your weight from one foot to the other to "take" the tool with you to advance along the work piece. This "turner's sway" helps steady the tool as you turn your arms and body into a three point steady.



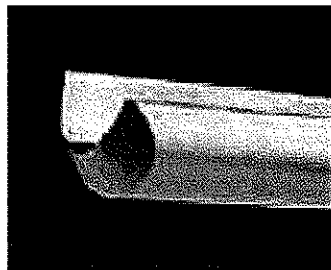
## Problems

The most common problems I have noted with beginner turners with this tool are:

- Trying to hold the tool square to the work leading to the tool trying to run off in the opposite direction
- Failure to start the cut with the handle low enough to “rub the bevel” resulting in tearing fibers rather than shearing them, ie trying to use it as a scraper.
- Not working toward the end in a sweeping cut. Instead coming in from the end where the tool comes in from open space, potentially causing a catch at the end of the work piece or lifting a splinter the length of the job.
- Poor body position not allowing for long smooth cuts by transferring weight from one foot to the other
- Holding the tool against the tool rest too tightly causing the tool to drag and jump during the cutting - not moving smoothly.

## Sharpening

Sharpening the tool is simple as placing the handle in the “V” arm of a sharpening jig or laying it flat on the grinder table, aligning the bevel to the face of the sharpening wheel and then rotating the handle smoothly. Be careful not to over rotate the tool which will cause the square shoulder to be rounded over.



## Summary

Tool size is not very important as the rounded edge can only touch the work at a single point no matter how big the tool is. I particularly like the tool from *P&N* as it is milled from a solid piece of bar stock rather than forged from a flat sheet of steel – more mass, less vibration and more smoothness. Particularly where it joins the handle! Where most SRG slim down to a thinnish tang, the *P&N* tool is at full diameter.

Whenever you are at your club and see another shaped SRG, ask the turner if you might borrow it for a minute or two to see if it suits you better. After all, that is why we meet – to try new things, get some advice and pass the same along.