

Keith Tompkins V-Skew

by Kurt Hertzog

For those woodturners who dread using a skew chisel, there is a tool available that will allow you to get back into the water. The V-skew, designed by Keith Tompkins and available through Packard Woodworks, is virtually catch-proof (see **Fig. 1**).

The traditional skew chisel, whether a straight or radius grind, is a versatile turning tool. But for all its virtues and versatility, it comes with a very unforgiving manner. Deviate more than a little bit from the sweet spot, or creep a bit from the long or short point during a cut, and there will be a new design in your woodturning—usually a threaded feature.

The Tompkins V-skew avoids that tendency by moving away from the traditional hollow or flat grind on the tool. This skew uses a convex grind (see **Fig. 2**). The convex grind requires you to continually force the edge into the cut. There is no incentive to “dive” and cause a catch. Sorby used this concept on their Spindlemaster a few years back. The Spindlemaster had a radius shape on the edge, whereas the V-skew is straight.

The V-skew is very straightforward in use. The tool is presented to the work with the shaft perpendicular to the work rotation axis (see **Fig. 3**). This presents the cutting edge to the work at about 45°. Rub the bevel, create a small clearance angle, and the tool cuts. The grind angle is identical on both sides of the tool, so it cuts the same whether traveling left or right. When detailing or putting a curved cut on a workpiece, the tool shaft remains perpendicular to the axis of the work (see **Fig. 4**). The shaft is rotated on the axis into the cut as needed. The V-skew

can do the same cuts that a traditional skew can do—planing cuts, beads, shallow coves, and end-grain cuts.

There are two sizes currently available. The tool is well made and the shaft is “beefy,” with the bottom corners of the shaft generously radiused for smooth gliding along the tool rest. Try as I might, I was unable to get the dreaded catch. Perhaps if you try hard enough, you may be able to. My guess is that you’ll do quite nicely working with the Tompkins V-skew without experiencing the dreaded catches that you remember from the past.



Fig. 1

The V-skew is nicely made and is available in two sizes from Packard Woodworks.



Fig. 2

A view from the bottom side shows that the cutting edges are angled at about 45° with the bevel ground convexly.



Fig. 3

In use, the tool is presented perpendicularly to the axis of the work with the angle of the edge automatically presented at 45°, regardless of left or right direction of cut.

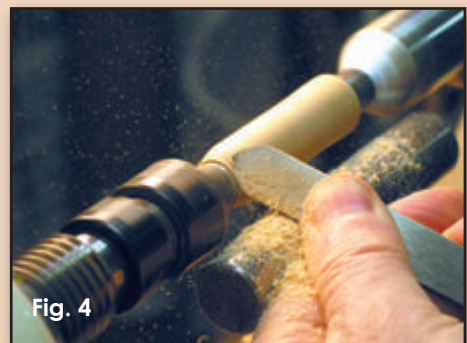


Fig. 4

Going around a curve requires a simple rotation of the tool, while continuing to keep “forcing” the tool into the cut.