

Woodworking Machines

Woodworking Machines - Wood Turning Lathes

On this page

[What should you do before using a wood turning lathe?](#)

[What should not be done when working with a wood turning lathe?](#)

[What safety procedures should be followed when using a wood turning lathe?](#)

What should you do before using a wood turning lathe?

A wood turning lathe can be dangerous if not used properly.

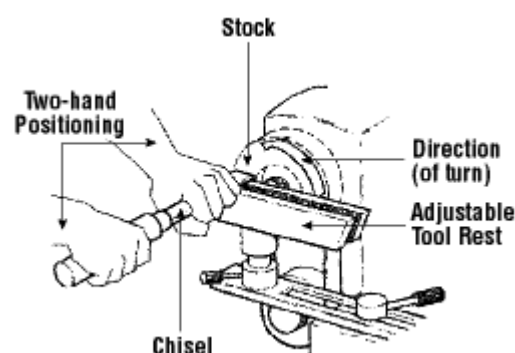
- Read the owner's manual carefully.
- Make sure you understand instructions before attempting to use any tool or machine. Only experienced and trained lathe operators should be allowed to operate lathes.
- Learn the applications and limitations before use.

Refer to [Woodworking Machines - General Safety Tips](#) for general safety precautions.

What safety procedures should be followed when using a wood turning lathe?

- Wear safety glasses with side shields or safety goggles, or a face shield (with safety glasses or goggles) to protect yourself from flying chips.
- Wear hearing protection that is suitable for the level and frequency of the noise you are exposed to in the woodworking area.
- Wear respiratory protection when dust is generated (e.g., during sanding operations).
- Wear protective footwear when required.
- Work in a well-lighted area.

- Before the lathe is turned on, make sure that all clamps and fittings are secure and that the work piece is free to turn.
- Use stock that is free of defects, such as loose knots, splits, cracks, or foreign objects.
- Hold tools firmly with both hands and against the tool rest.
- Hold the stock securely on the faceplate or between the centres.
- Use only furnished or approved tools that are meant for lathe work.
- Use sharp, well-maintained chisels and gouges.
- Select a speed that is appropriate for the job. Operate at speeds recommended by the manufacturer. Select a low speed and use a moderate cut depth to prevent splinters from flying out during roughing operations. The actual speed of the lathe depends on the type of wood, diameter of stock, nature of work being done, and type of tool used.
- Adjust tool rests so that they are parallel and as close as possible to the stock. They should also be set high enough so that tools will cut into the wood slightly above the centre of the work being turned.
- Remove the tool rest when sanding or polishing.
- Use appropriate tools to hold the sandpaper or emery paper whenever possible. Examples include a 'nutcracker' or paper fixed to a piece of flat wood. If you must use your hands always hold the paper in a way that will not allow the paper to catch, pull, or entangle around the stock.
- To make a faceplate turning, one hand steadies the tip of the chisel, which holds the edge against the tool rest while the other hand guides the tool. Keep the tip of the chisel held higher than the handle.
- Turn off the power and lock out the machine when making any adjustments or changes to the setup.



What should not be done when working with a wood turning lathe?

- Do not wear gloves, loose clothing (including hood strings), rings or jewellery that can hang outside one's clothing. Clothing should be comfortable but not so loose that it can catch on the machine or get entangled with any rotating parts or the wood being turned; shirts should be tucked in, and long hair tied back.
 - Do not leave a running lathe unattended—leave only after it has been turned off and come to a complete stop.
 - Do not use makeshift tools.
 - Do not use stock containing checks, splits, cracks, or knots.
-

Fact sheet last revised: 2025-03-10

Disclaimer

Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy, currency and completeness of the information, CCOHS does not guarantee, warrant, represent or undertake that the information provided is correct, accurate or current. CCOHS is not liable for any loss, claim, or demand arising directly or indirectly from any use or reliance upon the information.