

Woodworkers of Central New York, Inc.

Turning a Pocket Box Wizard Wand

Demonstration by Ray Smith – March 8, 2022



Kids and adults alike love wizard wands. Why not make one with a hidden compartment!



Blank size is 1-inch square x 13-5/8" long – that is the throat of my bandsaw. Mark centers on both ends of blank, dimple with awl. Mount blank between centers and use a roughing gouge to turn it round. I will usually put a rough taper on the round blank.

Mount blank in chuck with pin jaws, the other end of blank is in a cone center. RPM of lathe is better at high speeds at this point - 1150 to 1750.

Mark blank with pencil using story stick, marking ends and location of tenon and cut off points. About 4" for the handle plus the waste in the chuck, width of parting tool, 5/8" for the tenon, and the rest is the artistic part of the wand. Knowing most of these will go to children I usually make the business end of the wand a bit bulbous, so a poke will not leave a mark or put out an eye.

Size tenon with parting tool and 1/2" open end wrench. Tenon will be about 5/8" long. Sand down tenon. The sizing of the tenon is crucial for a good fit and 'pop' when the wand is pulled apart.

Turn handle end at future parting line – not too deep.

Turn wand to desired shape, I usually turn three small beads with the toe end of the skew chisel. This is to hide the location of the compartment. The smooth taper of the wand is the hard part. The wand may chatter as the wood gets thinner.

Once at the desired shape sand it down. If you use smooth cuts with the skew chisel sanding should be minimal. I have sanding blocks to make this easier, 220 and 400 grit.

Finish wand with (wipe on poly) with walnut oil and bee's wax. Once the wand is cut from the handle it will be impossible to do this.

Part wand at base of tenon near the handle. Or for safety you can use a saw with the lathe off.

Dimple the handle with the cone center. This will help ensure the handle and wand will be concentric.

Change out the cone center with a drill chuck and 1/2" brad point bit. Slow the lathe speed down for drilling. My lathe is belt and pulley, not variable speed drive; my slowest speed is 500 RPM. The wood may squeak while drilling, wax will quiet the squeak. One time I did this with a green crayon and the inside of the compartment was green. Now you can see why the handle end was not made too small. If the end of the handle was turned too small prior to drilling it may break (don't ask me how I know that). I drill to a depth of about 3-1/4" so I can fit a pack of smarties in the handle. Amazon does not sell Unicorn hair, Dragon heart string or Phoenix feathers – so I use smarties.

Once the hole is drilled you can check the fit of the tenon. The handle will be warm at first from the drilling. Now is the time to adjust the fit, sanding the inside of the drilled hole if the tenon is too big. If the tenon is too small you can coat the tenon with a layer of Elmer's glue and let it dry. Then fit the tenon again (don't ask how I know this). Sand the face of the handle.

Part the handle at the butt end. I then take off the chuck, put on my sanding disc on the lathe and sand down both ends of the wand end and the butt end of the handle. My wand then gets the swish and flick test and is measured for length. Put in a pack of smarties for the young witch or wizard and the wand is complete.

Tools Needed:

Lathe

Straight tool rest, longer would be better - mine is 6"

Roughing gouge

Parting tool

Skew chisel

Spindle gouge

Drive center

Cone center

Awl

Chuck with pin jaws

Drill chuck with 1/2" brad point bit

Story stick & pencil

1/2" open end wrench

Sanding blocks 220 & 400 grit

Sanding sticks round and rectangular

Sanding disc for lathe

Scotch bright pad - de-nibbing

Bee's wax, walnut oil finish

Cotton rags

Several blanks

