

Using a Three-point Tool to Make Beads

The three-point tool is a fast, easy way to make decorative beads on a turned piece. Beads can be used on spindle turnings as well as end-grain pieces. It is best to begin by practicing the process on a rounded cylinder before moving on to end-grain turnings. Once you have mastered the three-point tool, you will discover how enjoyable it is to add beads to your turnings.



Tool Size and Position:

- A quarter-inch three-point tool is a good choice for general use, although a three-eighth-inch tool is good for making larger beads.
- The three-point tool should be presented horizontally to the wood, with one of the triangle surfaces facing up. The tip of the triangle should be pointed at the wood.
- The tool rest should be close to the wood and raised high enough so that the point of the tool is at the center of the wood.

Marking and Making the Bead:

- Make a pencil mark on either side of where you want to place the bead. The distance between these two marks will vary, depending on the desired size of the bead.
- With the three-point tool positioned horizontally as described above, gently push it into the wood to create a small initial v-cut on each of the lines you have marked.
- Keeping the tool horizontal, gently push it into one of the v-cuts. Roll the tool toward the center of the bead while, at the same time, lowering the tool handle. Stop when you reach the top or center of the bead.
- Position the tool horizontally at the v-cut on the other side of the bead. Gently push the tool into this cut while rolling it toward the center and lowering the handle at the same time.
- Repeat the process of presenting the tool horizontally and rolling it toward the center of the bead while lowering the handle. Do this on both sides of the bead until it is rounded over.
- If desired when the bead is completed, use a skew chisel to deepen the cuts on either to accent the bead or give it a bolder look.

Woodturning Tools, Techniques, and Projects



Correct Tool Movement: The movement of simultaneously rolling the tool and lowering the handle to produce a slicing cut is essential.

- Rolling and lowering the tool bring the cutting edge of the three-point tool into contact with the wood at an angle. This results in a very clean slicing cut. If the tool is moved horizontally without lowering the handle, the wood is scraped rather than sliced.
- Lowering the handle while rolling the tool pulls the tool tip away from the wood. This reduces the risk of the tip catching wood as the bead is cut.



Bead Stick

Three-Point Tool 2