

Hand Thread Chasing Notes

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Here are a few things to keep in mind if you are interested in learning hand thread chasing.



- It is easier than it looks!
- It is fun to learn and very satisfying when you succeed.
- Thread chasers come in a set of two with one for inside threads and one chaser for outside threads.
- Coarser threads like 10 TPI are stronger but more difficult to cut than finer threads like 16 TPI or 20 TPI. Learning with a 20 TPI chaser is easier because the chaser moves at half the speed of a 10 TPI chaser to cover the same length of threads (not number). But, the 20 TPI requires finer wood. If buying your first set, I recommend starting with a 16 TPI set of chasers. The 16 TPI pitch is good middle of the road size and a compromise on difficulty of learning. I find 20 TPI too fine except for very small boxes and fewer woods will hold 20 TPI without crumbling while chasing.
- Lathe speed: Your lathe must be capable of running at speeds in the 150 – 350 range. A skilled thread chaser might be capable of threading at 500 but trying to learn at that speed would be very frustrating. I chase 16 TPI at about 315 RPM. I go a little slower with a 10 TPI chaser and a bit faster with a 20 TPI chaser.
- Three critical components to successful hand thread chasing:
 - The quality of the wood
 - The chasers (the TPI pitch, sharpness), and lastly
 - The thread chasing skills of the turner

My suggestion is to reduce the impact of the first two variables when learning by starting with materials known to take threads well and to buy quality chasers and not attempt to make them.

- Hand thread chasing requires a hard, dense grain. Very few domestic woods qualify. Forget about woods like walnut, maple and cherry. Mountain Mahogany is excellent but not readily available. I have had good results with Osage Orange, Dogwood and Mountain Laurel and pretty good success with Bradford Pear. You can also practice on alternative materials such as corian, pvc, and some plastics and acrylics. Best to start learning with a wood known to be excellent for thread chasing. Someone referred to these as “uranium enriched woods” because they tend to be expensive imports such as boxwood, blackwood, lignum vitae, mopani, and many others.
- Wood must be dry and wood moves.
- Thread chasers are essentially scrapers and need to be kept sharp. Hone before using.