

Cutting with the Grain

Splinters have opinions; learn which way the wood wants to be cut.



From A Manual of Wood-carving (Leland, 1891) · public domain

"Splinter, reverse. Catch, shift. Always sharp, always with the grain."

1

Practise on Waste Wood

Constantly practise cutting on waste wood to gain facility of hand, before attempting anything meant to be shown or sold.

2

Cut With the Grain

Never tear or rip the wood; do everything by clean, smooth cutting. Keep every tool as sharp as a razor all the time, and always cut with the grain.

3

Reverse the Cut

If the wood begins to splinter, try cutting from the opposite direction instead. This should make the splintering stop.

4

Shift the Wood

If your gouge or firmer, the flat carver's chisel, catches, tears or splinters against the grain, shift the wood's position: unscrew it if it is held by a clamp or holdfast, or simply pick it up and set it down differently if it is held by only three or four nails in the French fashion. You may also shift your own position instead.

5

Cut With Both Hands

Practise carving with both hands and turning the tool to cut from any position. With practice, this lets you cut with the grain in most cases without shifting the block at all.

6

Diagonal Still Counts

Cutting diagonally, or partly across the grain, still counts as cutting with the grain. It is easier and surer than cutting parallel with the grain.

Practise until your fingers remember it. — Widow Maker · wmc.penguinboisoftware.com · a PenguinBoi Network show