

Turning keychains

By Chris Wright

Introduction:

Turning keychains is a good way to practice your turning skills and various finishing techniques. In this tutorial I am turning a keychain which has larger ends however, the techniques are the same for most 7mm keychain kits. You can either buy the bushings or turn the body with ends slightly larger than 7mm pen bushings to save money on parts. As with turning any item, remember to wear eye protection at all times.

Wood blank:

5/8" x 5 1/2" this standard pen blank size will give you two keychain blanks

Tools and kit:

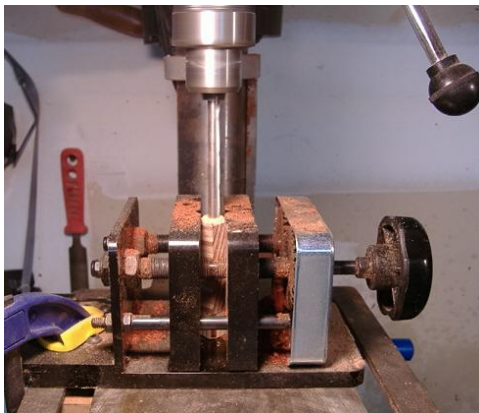
Face Shield
7mm keychain kit
keychain mandrel
keychain bushings
barrel trimmer

roughing gouge
spindle gouge or skew chisel
sandpaper (120-600 grits)
finishing supplies

Process:

Begin by drawing the cut lines on your wood blank. I use the keychain tube to do this as kits may vary slightly. Place the tube on the blank and draw a line where it ends.

Use a saw to cut the wood blank to size



The next step is to drill the wood with a 7mm drill bit. Use a clamping system or a drill bit vise to hold the wood securely. If possible, clamp the vise or pen clamp to the drill press for safety. If you are drilling by hand, clamp the wood blank to a counter or table while you drill. If you try to hold it and the drill bit goes through the side, you can hurt yourself.

With the wood blanks drilled, it's time to glue in the tubes. Spread some thin or "flexible" CA glue on the keychain tube and push it quickly into the wood blank. Make sure the tube ends up in the blank and not sticking out of the other side. One cheap tool that works great for inserting keychain tubes is a pencil. **NOTE:** Other glues with longer drying time may be used. This might be a good break time to demonstrate the next few steps.



Let the glue dry a few minutes and then use a barrel trimmer to square the ends of the wood to the tube. Notice I have the wood blank clamped to the counter for safety.

Now for the turning part! Mount the keychain blank on your keychain mandrel with the bushings. Set your tool rest close to the work with out hitting it. Spin the wood by hand to make sure it clears the tool rest. If everything is OK, turn the lathe on. Using a roughing gouge, work the keychain blanks down to a cylinder. Leaving the blank a bit bigger than the bushings will give you room to make decorative design decisions if you want.

With your spindle gouge or skew chisel, turn the blanks to their final size and design. Try not to turn away any material from your bushings or you'll have to get new ones to turn your next keychain. Notice for this kit, the ends are bigger than the bushings.



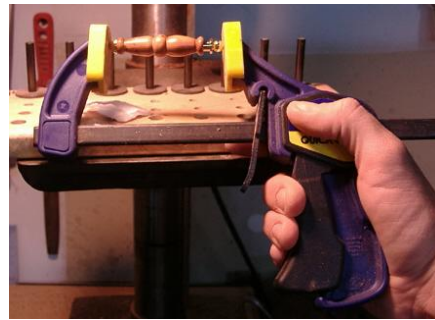


Once you have finished turning the keychain, it's time to sand it. Move the tool rest out of the way and sand from the bottom of the keychain. Start with 120 grit and work your way to 600 grit. If you notice deep sanding marks, stop the lathe and sand by hand along the length of the keychain. This should get rid of them. Once the marks are gone, finish going through the grits.

When the keychain is sanded, apply the finish of your choice. Your mentor may have a few options for you to use. A few suggestions are friction polish or woodturner's wax. Explore each of them to find your personal favorite. On my keychain, I used friction polish. To use it, stop the lathe, put a few drops of polish on a paper towel and rub it on the keychain. Turn the lathe on and lightly rub again from the bottom to polish the finish to a high shine.



With the keychain turned and finished, remove it from the mandrel and arrange the parts to be pressed into the keychain blanks. A drill press is the easiest way to do this, but if you don't have access to one, a hand clamp can be used as well.



With the parts pressed together, attach the keychain ring and you're finished!



