# Which direction to stroke your edge? Discussion.

Posted by leomitch - 17 Sep 2011 08:15

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There has been much discussion about which direction to stroke on the edge your are building...back to front up, front to back up or back to front down blah, blah, blah. I am not sure whether or not I am doing it the best way, but I lightly stroke in all directions. Some say one certain way for a good slicer and another for a good chopper. I find doing it my way that all my edges seem to cut, slice and chop very well. Shave arm hair well too. My Helle Temagami with its triple laminate blade (not sure what the steel is) and my Bravo 1 with A2 tool steel on which I have changed the grind from convex to a bevel edge, are both super keen at cutting almost anything...and they do it better than with their original edges. They are amazingly sharp. The sound of their blades slicing their way through paper is a very satisfying low buzzing. That is the best I can describe, but they both sound different than the other knives doing the same thing. I have found that the sounds of things like the sound of the diamond paddles on steel or the whisper of the leather strops against an edge being honed, give you important information. Am I the only one who finds this?

When I am raising a burr for that all-important first work-up on the WEPS, I scrub the edge straight up and down with some pressure, bit by bit making certain the scratches reach the apex of the edge without fail. This is the only time I don't use any other stroke, just scrub up and down being sure to cover the whole length of the edge until I can feel the burr on the opposite side of the edge from which I am scrubbing.

Maybe this is helpful! Any discussion pro or con?

Cheers

Leo

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# Re: Which direction to stroke your edge? Discussion.

Posted by dschur - 17 Sep 2011 18:17

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I stroke up and down (small scrubbing motion) for the burr creation as well, It's really needed when the middle burrs right away, but the tip or near choil needs more attention. I repeat that scrubbing through about the 800 grit diamond stones on each steep up, followed by the long strokes (probably 100-200 per side). After about 800 I start to loose the feel of the burr (and I know I did it a lot on the lower grits so I don't care anymore). Outside of burr formation I do mostly back to front long strokes.

On the ceramics though I tend to do a lot of what I would call medium elliptical circles as well as scrubbing, both up down and back/forth but nor near the tip for the latter. I don't know why on just the ceramics, but for me that really smoothes out the bevel and gets ready for the strops. If I can come off the ceramics with a heavily mirrored edge I know it's all downhill from there on the strops I spend the most time on the ceramics.

Be very careful with mixing back-to-front and front-to-back at a good cadence around the tip on longer knives. It may seem efficient, but I won't do it any more, I think it is unsafe, as I think just front to back might be. I was doing my Kabar and went past the tip, catching the side of my left thumb right between the side of the nail and meat on the return. Strangely as the knife was so sharp already (clean cut), with super glue it healed up really fast, but I'd rather not repeat it.

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## Re: Which direction to stroke your edge? Discussion.

Posted by leomitch - 17 Sep 2011 19:44

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**dschur wrote:**

"Be very careful with mixing back-to-front and front-to-back at a good cadence around the tip on longer knives. It may seem efficient, but I won't do it any more, I think it is unsafe, as I think just front to back might be. I was doing my Kabar and went past the tip, catching the side of my left thumb right between the side of the nail and meat on the return. Strangely as the knife was so sharp already (clean cut), with super glue it healed up really fast, but I'd rather not repeat it."

Never fear, I don't have a cadence to speak of! I am too old and too f'ing fat for that.LOL! I move slowly and take a long time savoring the process. If I ever developed a cadence I would surely lose a finger or two!

Super glue eh! I will keep that in mind! Good tip and enjoyable discussion.

Best regards

Leo

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## Re: Which direction to stroke your edge? Discussion.

Posted by Razoredge - 18 Sep 2011 00:02

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Glad to know I'm not the only one to have done that.

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## Re: Which direction to stroke your edge? Discussion.

Posted by jendeindustries - 18 Sep 2011 20:00

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Here's what I noticed about the directions:

Up and down strokes make for the fastest burr formation. This is because of at least two reasons: (1) the ~3/4" wide plate/stone is literally abrading a channel ~3/4" wide in a specified spot on the blade; and (2) there generally tends to be more pressure applied with this motion.

This is ideal for initial profiling and chip removal, IMO, but can leave you with a "wavy" edge that has variable thicknesses along the length of the bevel. Once a burr forms on both sides of the blade, you will need to switch to a sweeping motion.

The sweeping motion blends the depths of the channels formed from the up and down strokes until they are even. This helps explain why there may not immediately be burr formation when switching from the up and down to the sweeping motion. The best way is to establish the burr with up and down strokes, then switch to a sweeping motion without changing grits. When the burr forms on the sweeping, then switch grits.

The direction of the sweep, we can argue the finer points, such as safety or the effectiveness of cutting or longevity based on the position of the scratches on the bevel.... However, the most important thing is to remove the previous grit's scratches at each level. This can be done by alternating the sweeping position with the up and down, or by reversing the sweep stroke. I personally do up and down followed by sweeps at every level. (FWIW, I sweep from heel to tip in a downward motion).

Here's a link to a slide show demonstrating the transition with microscope pictures. 🙂

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## Re: Which direction to stroke your edge? Discussion.

Posted by garyfergus - 15 Oct 2011 08:45

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Reading these posts a couple of points come to mind,

1. Honing only off the blade rather than on to the blade (so the stone moves upwards rather than downwards) has the advantage that it develops the appropriate muscle memory and technique for stropping, where if you hone downwards onto the blade there's a good chance of cutting into the leather strop. If you're the kind of person who is happier switching onto auto-pilot and just having one automatic technique then let that be off the blade so that you don't inadvertently shred your strops.

2. No one's mentioned that it's important not to swivel or roll the stone, especially the coarser diamond stones, or else the corner of the stone can turn your beautiful knife into a serrated blade pretty quickly! Seriously, a good stroking technique (and stroking speed) is one that keeps the stone flat to the blade at

all times and discourages any tendency to swivel or roll the stone.

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