First question
Posted by Staze - 01 Oct 2012 13:31

All,

So, got the WEPS (Pro Pack 1), and was extremely pleased with the packing in the box, as well as the all around quality of the device.

But, as so many others have seen, the edge I got on my first knife was, bluntly (har har) terrible.

One thing I'm wondering about is that in the documents it says to make sure the stone doesn't come off the edge of the knife. So, my question is, does that include the tip? I haven't seen any good videos that show whether the person is basically pulling away with the stone as it reaches the end, or are they running off the tip of the blade continuing the "arc". I think it would probably take a top down slow motion video to really see this, so I figured I'd just ask instead.

Anyone?

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Re: First question
Posted by Staze - 02 Oct 2012 03:23

Wow, okay, what a difference a day makes.

So, first off, the knife I was playing with is an old Robinson "Stainless Steel" pairing knife. Awesome, right.

So, last night, I went 22°, but tonight, I changed to 20° (would have gone shallower except the blade is too short to allow for any less). So, I started from scratch, and made sure to build up a full burr. Then "polished" away with 100/200/400/600/800/1000. Results, better, but not great. So, went back down to 400, and built a burr again, this time pretty quickly since it was apexed already, and went back up the progression, taking more time at each step. Results, better still, but not awesome. So, back down to 600, burr, repeat. Results, pretty good. Cuts paper well, but doesn't push cut, or anything, and still not nearly as sharp as my Shun pairing knife.

Okay, so, I think "maybe it's the steel". Grab another old dull pairing knife. This one a 30 year old Gerber. Still doing 20°. Burr, polish, polish, polish. Whole process took me maybe 20 minutes, at most (largely during commercials of "Castle"). Finish with 1000, and the edge is at least 2x better than the Robinson. Cool. So, I figure I should try stropping (I've never really stropped a knife before, and honestly thought it was kind of silly to think leather would really do much). First dry, and they do something, but not much after a few minutes. So, I grab the paste, and do the 5µ side. Boy howdy, after a few minutes I had something, Didn't hurt the strops at all as the motion for me is quite natural. "Finished" with that, and moved to 3.5µ. Even better. It'll push-cut paper now. I am still not sure it's as sharp as the Shun, but I'm figuring some of that is angle (Shun being 16°).

One other thing of note: boy do the shoulders burn after 20-30 minutes of solid work. Guessing that'll pass though once those muscles get used to it. =)

So, what did I learn? 1. It's all about the burr, stupid. 2. patience. If it sucks, don't be afraid to go back and redo a step. 3. Steel quality/type heavily influences edge quality. 4. Stropping isn't make-believe.

I'm very impressed, and glad I splurged on the Pro-Pack I. Because while the 600grit edge on the Gerber was very serviceable, it was nothing compared to the edge post 800/1000, and stropping. =)

Going to keep at it and will be sure to ask any questions I come across. Will also be posting a review on my site in the coming days. Want to try something bigger than a pairing knife first, though. =D

Thanks for all the help everyone. The learning process, while still/always ongoing, would be MUCH steeper and daunting if not for this forum and its members. =D

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Re: First question

Posted by wickededge - 02 Oct 2012 07:30

Hey Staze,

That's a great write-up of your process. Thanks for posting it. I think you'll find that the more sharpening you do, the better it will get, especially as your stones break in more. I know I preach it a lot, but there is a considerable break in period with the stones and you'll continue to be surprised at the constant improvement. The results that the strops produce are pretty awesome. If you look around the forum at some of the microscopic photos of edges I and others have done, you can really see just how much the strops are doing at the microscopic level to improve the edge. Happy sharpening.

--Clay

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Re: First question
Posted by cbwx34 - 02 Oct 2012 08:56

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Staze wrote:

One other thing of note: boy do the shoulders burn after 20-30 minutes of solid work. Guessing that'll pass though once those muscles get used to it. =)

Nice write up... this comment though made me wonder if maybe you're using too much pressure? Just thought I'd mention it... too much pressure can be counter productive. (Sometimes there's a clue in passing comments.).

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Re: First question
Posted by Staze - 02 Oct 2012 10:14

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yes, and the first time on the first blade, that might have been the case. But I've read ApexGS enough to know the "barely make contact" which I did the times that worked. The 100 stones I used a bit of pressure, but the rest of the stones I actually hold back some of the weight of the stones.

No, I think it's just my shoulders are not used to that motion. I bet a rower would be an awesome sharpener. =)

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Re: First question
Posted by Staze - 02 Oct 2012 11:21

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wickededge wrote:

Hey Staze,

That's a great write-up of your process. Thanks for posting it. I think you'll find that the more sharpening you do, the better it will get, especially as your stones break in more. I know I preach it a lot, but there is a considerable break in period with the stones and you'll continue to be surprised at the constant

improvement. The results that the strops produce are pretty awesome. If you look around the forum at some of the microscopic photos of edges I and others have done, you can really see just how much the strops are doing at the microscopic level to improve the edge. Happy sharpening.

Clay, yeah, I've seen the photos, but honestly, something in my head just went "sure, it LOOKS more refined, but it can't be that much sharper". And I'll be the first to admit, I was wrong. =P It's a pretty marked improvement. The blade went from being able to cut paper okay, to being able to cut it smoothly and without much effort. I know paper is kind of "the" test, but as Bruce Lee said "Board's don't hit back". So I'll really know how sharp it is when I go to actually use the knife. =)

Going to move on to an old pocket knife tonight and see what I can do with that. I have to wonder how long the upward curve continues. I mean, that first hump is learning. Learning to make the burr, learning when to move on, etc, and that one will continue for a while yet, as I (or anyone) gets to know the sound/feel of the stones as they finish their stage.

Then there's the curve that's going on at the same time of the stones breaking in. And it's pretty obvious how they've changed since the first time. The first time I used the 100/200's, I was kind of shocked by the amount of dust (metal, and diamond I'd guess) that was generated (some of that, no doubt, was from resetting the angle as well. Felt like I needed a vacuum. After that initial go round, the dust dropped off a lot (though it still gets everywhere on the clamp, board, etc).

I'd probably compare it to owning a Prius (which I do). From when you first get it, you learn how to best drive to get the best mileage (much to the annoyance of other people on the road). =P But also during that time, your tires are breaking in, as well as your engine, which as time goes on, lead to better and better mileage. Grippy new tires get worse mileage than nicely aged ones (until they get to bald, when it goes backward a bit). So my hope is that the stones don't work the best right before they need to be replaced. =P The whole idea of a "break-in" period doesn't make sense to some people, but you just have to keep reassuring them "yes, you will get better as time goes on, and no, it's not ALL from skill".

Thanks very much Clay, and everyone, as always. My goal is to be good enough that I can have family bring knives to Thanksgiving to sharpen, which after the first knife I doubted a bit, but after last night's experience, I'm fairly confident it shouldn't be a problem. =)

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Re: First question
Posted by ApexGS - 02 Oct 2012 15:04

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You should see the pile of knives I have here on my desk from practicing! I've made my fair share of screwups too, including on my very own EDC knife I accidentally used the wrong depth key holes! I had to throw it in reverse and go back to 600 grit to undo the slight amount of accidental reprofiling I caused with the 1000 grit touch up. That's one of the best things about the system, I've found... being able to undo those D'OH moments pretty easily and learn from a bit of extra work, rather than a ruined chunk of steel.

@Clay: Now you have me preaching the stone wear-in gospel too! Just in the maybe six weeks or so I've had my kit (has it really been that long?) all of the stones have settled in nicely and continue to improve.

On the topic of pressure, there are times where some elbow grease helps but by and large on most normal sized knives and MANY types of steel, pressure is detrimental. I had to really put some muscle into profiling that kukri, but some cheap made in China cutlery a friend brought over would chip just sneezing on it. The first week or so was all countering my natural heavy-handedness on the stones.

Regarding stropping, that's something I'm slowly collecting more knowledge about but the Pro Pack definitely gives you a glimpse of how effective it can be. There's a big gap between 1000 grit diamond stones and a 5 micron paste, though, so until the stones wear in a bit you'll be seeing edges that aren't super polished... but plenty sharp! The best looking edges I've done took a long time stropping with both 5 and 3.5 micron pastes from the Pro Pack, so I'm already looking at bridging that gap. I've read a lot about sandpaper and figured I'd try that out, treating the more fragile paper (and different media, aluminum oxide typically) as more of a stropping operation. I can say that 600 grit wet/dry makes a pretty nice edge, looking forward to getting the grits up to 3000 (not available locally, anywhere)

Whew, wall of text! Look at me sounding all edumacated and stuff!

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