# Is the blade ready for stropping?
Posted by WolfsLair - 26 Jan 2013 10:46

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I just received my balsa strops and a set of split leather strops along with some HA diamond spray (0.25) and chromium oxide paste. I will be doing some experimenting this weekend, which is always enjoyable! I was just curious, what is the last stone you use before moving to the stropping phase. Please list the type of stone and the grit. What I would like to test is this, "at what point is stropping unproductive due to the blade being too coarse?"

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# Re: Is the blade ready for stropping?
Posted by NicholasAngeja1 - 26 Jan 2013 12:52

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I use the WE diamond stones and 14/10 diamond paste on balsa strops and 5/3.5 diamond paste on leather strops. What I found, that works for me, is I sharpen with the 600 grit diamond stones and move up to 14 micron paste on balsa, then move back to the 800 grit diamond stones, then 10 micron paste on balsa, then I finish the edge on 1000 grit diamond stones. Once i'm happy with the edge I lower the angle by a degree or two and progress to polishing using the 5/3.5 diamond pastes on leather strops till i have a mirror polish. The wicked edge knife sharpener website has a detailed list of every stone and diamond paste/spray and images of scratch patterns under resources, labelled grit comparison chart. It helped me to determine the stone/grit sequence for sharpening.

p.s. I hope you have a microscope to help you test the effectiveness of stropping and when stropping is unproductive.

Happy sharpening

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# Re: Is the blade ready for stropping?
Posted by Geocyclist - 26 Jan 2013 13:25

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I always start after my finest stone. Sometimes I quit after 1000 diamond, sometimes I go to 3k or 10k chosera.

Nicholas, I am interested in your progression. Do you find it works better alternating between the stones and balsa strops? Have you tried going to 1000 diamonds before stropping?

What difference do you see between the balsa and leather?

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## Re: Is the blade ready for stropping?
Posted by mark76 - 26 Jan 2013 16:31

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Nearly any blade will benefit from stropping. But if you have a stone of a particular grit size, using the stone is usually more effective than stropping with a compound of an equivalent grit size. Unless you’re out for a special effect. So, as Geo said, strop after your finest stone. And then you have lots of options, but that’s another topic

Balsa and leather. The funny thing is that I see less of a difference than one might expect. In fact, with the WEPS pastes, I see very little difference. Leather still has a bit more stiction, but it is far less than one would probably expect. It does have an advantage over balsa in that it is able to blend a multi-beveled edge into a convex edge. However, with balsa you don't run the risk of accidentally rounding your edge.

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## Re: Is the blade ready for stropping?
Posted by PhilipPasteur - 26 Jan 2013 18:36

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**NicholasAngeja1 wrote:**

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Nicholas,

This has come up many times on the WEPS boards. The common wisdom here, and advice I have given is to go through all of your stones and then strop. Looking at grit scratch patterns does not neccessarily tell you what is happening at the edge with different media. Give it a try and see what you think. The beauty of the WEPS is that you can easily experiment.

Something to think about. Stropping will give a bit of a convex profile to the edge of the edge. Balsa less

so than leather, but it still does it. When you switch back to a stone after stropping, you need to remove that convex shoulder before you get to the edge again. You are working against yourself by switching back and forth.

Phil

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## Re: Is the blade ready for stropping?

Posted by NicholasAngeja1 - 27 Jan 2013 04:07

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I only started my grit progression, as I described, a couple days ago. The results on (2)vg10 and (1)high carbon knives were insane and the best I have ever gotten, literally hair welding. I did baby the edge a lot, made consent contact with the blade, started a grit with little pressure and slowly removed all pressure as I finished with the grit, after 1000 grit I passed the leather strops over the blade once then proceeded to change the sharpening angle by one degree after a few passes. In the past I usually stropped after the highest stone or ceramic, but after reading up on scratch patterns of different grits I got to thinking of the best way to get a mirror polish.... anyways, that's what I came up with and having the balsa strops is the only reason I attempted it. WEPS is a real beauty to experiment with:)

Phil, Thanks for the thought. Right back at you, just a thought, we're going to strop anyways causing the bevel edges to convex anyways..... In the past I found I spent too much time stropping after the stone to obtain a mirror polish causing the bevel to convex and affect my edge. This saved me a lot of time and the polish was great, but I did baby it:)

Geo, Both balsa and leather are great, they both have great advantages over the other in specific things. Balsa is tougher and the leather is a great polisher. I'll most likely always put 5 micron plus on balsa and anything under 5 micron on leather or any of the super fine strops. Anyways their both great:)

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## Re: Is the blade ready for stropping?

Posted by PhilipPasteur - 27 Jan 2013 16:28

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**NicholasAngeja1 wrote:**

Phil, Thanks for the thought. Right back at you, just a thought, we're going to strop anyways causing the bevel edges to convex anyways..... In the past I found I spent too much time stropping after the stone to obtain a mirror polish causing the bevel to convex and affect my edge. This saved me a lot of time and the polish was great, but I did baby it

Nicholas,

I am a great proponent of doing what works for you. I never tend to argue with success. Still I would like to make some comments on this, from the logical point of view as well as my personal experience with the WEPS.

First, if you spend too much time using strops to remove scratches, you need finer stones. The pastes and sprays that we use on our strops just do not have the abrasive concentration that stones do, meaning the are slower and less efficient at scratch removal. Depending on the scratch width and depth, it is not practical to get rid of them with strops. Typically stropping is used for final polish and edge refinement, not scratch removal. Of course there are exceptions. Ken Schwartz sell some sprays with 30 micron abrasives and more in them. With these abrasives on a hard media like nanocloth. perhaps scratch removal is more in reach.

Second, I am not sure if I communicated well about the different effects of the strops and stones and why they sort of cancel each other out when you alternate them. Consider that the stones in theory give you a nice V at the edge. The strops add a convex shoulder below the edge of the edge. When you go from stones to strops, you put the convex on the edge. When you go back to the stones, you must remove the convex shoulder before you get back to that perfect V. Now, this just does not seem very efficient. There must be a reason that folks that have lots of experience with the WEPS do not recommend this.

Third, If your are truly rounding your edge with the strops, you might examine your stropping technique. Try reducing the angle a bit, or reducing the number of strokes, or lightening up on the pressure. This will not get scratches removed, but, again, at this level you shoudn't be trying to remove much in the way of scratches anyway.

Again, if what you are doing makes you happy, have at it. I am simply offering some of my experience... hard won at the expense of litteraly hundreds of hours sharpening on the WEPS. I have tried many, many different things. The way I use my WEPS now is way different than when I got it. However, I am still learning.

BTW One other thing to try as well... go through all of your stones and **then** strops, go back to something like the 1200 grit ceramics (or 1000 grit stones if that is what you heve) increase your angle by a degree or two and make a half dozen or so very light passes on the edge. If you have **over**
stropped and rounded your edge, this should fix it. It also adds back some of the tooth and bite that stropping and/or the use of very fine stones removes.

Phil

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## Re: Is the blade ready for stropping?

Posted by NicholasAngeja1 - 27 Jan 2013 17:24

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Cool, that's wonderful to learn. Thank you.

I've had the WEPS for almost a year and my technique has also changed a lot since I first began sharpening. Getting onto the WEPS forum has made me think about and question my technique and process of sharpening on the wicked edge. Thank again Phil

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