

Beginning Wood Burning

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CAUTION: PARENTAL OR ADULT SUPERVISION IS REQUIRED!

A good wood burning tool with variable heat control, several sizes and kinds of tips, and tip cleaning items (a Wel-Nek 5-in1 package, \$20, with the added transformer, \$25 would be ideal for a beginner). Make sure the system has a tool rest for the wood burner or buy one separately to rest the hot tool when not in use for burning. Try the Internet for these or check out Rockler Woodstore. IF you decide you like wood burning and want to really get into it then you can buy the more expensive models.

You might also want to invest in a small fluorescent light and a good gooseneck magnifier on a stand. Plumbers putty and a pencil stand to help mark parallel horizontal lines is also a handy tool. A level solid workspace, preferably with a built in electrical strip, is also required.

For beginners a few old gourds or gourd pieces is ideal to learn on. Learn HOW to use the burner before you begin on that special pattern, how to adjust for light to dark lines and geometric areas.

Use a PENCIL to place a design on a used or scrap piece of gourd. If you are planning on a geometrical design try this on an old gourd to learn on.

Set up your workspace so you only have your wood burning items on the workspace. CAUTION: Remember, the tips are hot enough to burn wood, therefore, they will readily catch paper, paper towels, etc. on fire.

Arrange your tools and then plug in the wood burner. SET THE TEMPERATURE CONTROL TO THE LOWEST SETTING TO BEGIN! DO NOT CHECK THE TEMPERATURE OF THE TOOL WITH YOUR FINGERS. AGAIN, THE TOOL GETS HOT ENOUGH TO BURN WOOD. Check the temperature on a scrap piece of gourd.

Use a general tip the first time on your design. The lightest setting MAY just barely burn the design in. Many times this light touch is all that is needed. For heavier lines adjust the temperature control setting one increment at a time OR leave the setting alone and just press harder on the tip. You might want to start this on a new part of the design so you can compare the different settings.

Now use your different tips and watch the difference in the burning for each tip at various temperatures also. For larger geometrical areas try different techniques and different tips to fill in the area (maybe a larger tip at low temperatures).

NOTE 1: To transfer a DETAILED pattern to a gourd you might try the following procedure. Reproduce the pattern on a copier. Now mark this copy as "FRONT". Next, turn the pattern over and trace the pattern on the back of the copy. Again, put this reverse design on the copier and reproduce that with 3-4 copies. Cut and tape one of these REVERSE patterns to your gourd. With a very large tip called a "shoe" inserted into your wood burner, burn the pattern onto your gourd much like using a small iron.

NOTE 2: To make great parallel lines on your gourd place some putty on a small board that you can then set your gourd on to steady it. Make sure the plate isn't going to interfere with the pencil stand. Pull the pencil stand near and adjust the height. Place the pencil on the gourd and turn the gourd slowly, holding the pencil lightly. Re-adjust the height for the next line and continue. Try and make all of your parallel horizontal lines in one setting, if possible.

NOTE 3: For great geometrical patterns purchase patterns at a stationery store and place those under plastic so you can trace them. Place masking tape on the plastic over the desired pattern and trace the pattern onto the tape. Gently pull the tape from the plastic and place precisely on the gourd. Gourds being cylindrical or spherical in shape, you may have to adjust the tape slightly. Lightly (at low temperature) burn the pattern through the tape. Now pull the tape and continue with your wood burning of the pattern.