

Top 30 Tips for Ideas & Patterns

Hints & tips shared by fellow woodcarvers:

- 1.** Look at real subjects rather than other artwork for carving ideas.
- 2.** Google/Images can give you thousands of carving ideas for any subject.
- 3.** Study Your Subject! Look at reference materials, work things out in clay, create sketches ... know your subject before you carve it.
- 4.** Get yourself some basic drawing books, practice.
- 5.** Unlock your imagination and creativity by wondering through your local library's arts/literature section.
- 6.** Fill your workshop with inspirational photos, quotes, poems, art.
- 7.** Failure is an ingredient in the process of learning. Successful people keep getting back up.
- 8.** Develop your visual skills. See things as they actually are and not as you assume them to be.
- 9.** Check out Ebay.com for lots of ideas for carvings.
- 10.** Bring your camera everywhere you go ... snap photos for patterns, future carvings.
- 11.** When using a digital camera take the camera as far away from the subject as possible and then use the zoom feature to fill the frame ... this will help minimize distortion that occurs when too close.
- 12.** If you see a building under construction go in and ask about making a carving or sign for the entrance.
- 13.** Re-sizing patterns is easy with this formula:

$$\frac{\text{new dimension}}{\text{old dimension}} \times 100$$
 If you have a 4" pattern and you want it to be 6" it is:
 $6/4 \times 100 = 150\%$. Going the other way a 6" pattern to 4" is $4/6 \times 100 = 66\%$.
- 14.** Use a coin or a bottom of a small paint bottle to create a perfect circle.
- 15.** Misplaced your carbon or graphite paper? Transfer patterns easily by darkening the backside of the paper pattern with your lead pencil, place on the wood and then outline the pattern .. the pattern will transfer.
- 16.** Glue your patterns on to cardboard from the back of a tablet and cut out easy to reuse your patterns.
- 17.** Some patterns from your printer or a graphics store are made with heat sensitive ink. Place the pattern on the wood face down and run an iron over it and the pattern will be transferred to the wood (in reverse however).
- 18.** Newsprint is perfect for large patterns, go to your local newspaper office and ask if they have any end rolls for sale.
- 19.** Graphite paper is much nicer and cleaner to work with than carbon paper.
- 20.** You can glue/spray adhesive a pattern on to wood and carve right through it.
- 21.** Print and then cut patterns out in plastic so they are durable and reuseable ... you can also see where knots are during layout.
- 22.** Correct pattern lines on your carving using different colored pencils to differentiate new from old lines.
- 23.** Use a mirror for really good looking face pattern.
- 24.** To reverse an image for a pattern make a copy of the original on a transparency and then flip it over and copy again.
- 25.** When drawing directly on the wood, soft pencils (B or 2B) are easier to clean up than hard pencils (H or HB).
- 26.** A 12" length of tape ruler (bendable type) can make a nice bending ruler.
- 27.** Drawing Tip: Keep your darkest tone really dark ... too lite makes the drawing flat and washed out.
- 28.** Practice drawing basic shapes before details.
- 29.** While drawing use a piece of paper as a shield to rest your hand on and prevent smearing from hand oils.
- 30.** Turn your drawing upside down or view in a mirror to help you notice subtle imperfections easier.

Send us an email at
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 to share your favorite Woodcarver's Tip.



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