

Whittling

From Start to Business



Whittling Turned Out To Be The Perfect Low-Cost, Low-Maintenance Hobby That You Can Take With You And Have It Turn Into A Business Before You Realize It's Happening

About the author



Hi, I'm Fred...

I'm a chainsaw carver, wood carver and whittler, that enjoys a good strong cup of coffee.

Whittle Bit of Everything was started whittling with a pocketknife. Then, it just got crazy!

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WARNING

Whittling, wood carving and chainsaw carving can cause serious injury to yourself and others. The blades don't care who they cut! Be safe. Wear proper PPE for the task at hand.

Index

[My Introduction to Whittling](#)

[Whittling Safety](#)

[Whittling Protection](#)

[Whittling and Drawing](#)

[Whittling Wood Species](#)

[Whittling Knives](#)

[Whittling Strops](#)

[Whittling Techniques](#)

[Whittling Project Part 1](#)

[Whittling Project Part 2](#)

[Finishing Your Artwork](#)

[Business of Whittling](#)

My Own Introduction to Whittling

I was out of work, running out of money, and needed a job quick. I was supposed to be filling out job applications. Fortunately, I watched a whittling video on YouTube instead. I was hooked! And, still am!!!

From whittling, I advanced into wood carving. I would rough out a carving with a handsaw, then finish it off with chisels and gouges. More often than not, a mallet needed to be used.

Of course, it wasn't long before the projects needed more than a mallet and chisels to get the wood off. Now, I get to carve with chainsaws, power tools, chisels and yes, my trusty whittling knife - full-time.



That's me. I'd just finished a carving at John Schneider Studios in Holden, Louisiana. Just a few years earlier, I didn't even know I could whittle, much less carve with chainsaws.

Even now, I still can't get enough of this stuff.

Which is what got me on this writing journey. I figure it's time to "pass it on." Unfortunately, I'm terrible at videos (I'm learning). Fortunately, I can write and take pictures.

So, "Whittling From Start to Business" was created.

Here's what's inside:

- Safety - Because keeping all your fingers is a good thing!
- Protection - Level 5 Stuff

- Drawing – Because not all of us can draw
- Wood Species – and why
- Whittling Knives – The hottest topic in whittling
- Stropping – For the sharpest blades you’ve ever seen in your life
- Whittling Techniques – Plus, what all the fancy words mean
- Your First Whittle – Using the drawing & techniques you just learned
- Business – For those wanting a return on their investment – And also because whittles tend to pile up.

It’s a lot of information. But it’s broken down into small chunks. You’ll see.

Plus, you’ll get to hear my side of the story. I’ve always wanted to learn whittling and wood carving. I just didn’t know I had the smarts to do so.

Different circumstances produce different results has never been more true. Sure, I could have filled out job applications instead of learning to whittle. I just couldn’t pass up the opportunity. This was the first time in my life I’d been unemployed, and here was a skill I had time to learn.

What would you have done?

Think about it, whittling has long been a cherished pastime because, unlike many woodworking hobbies, which I’ve done, whittling requires:

- Minimal Investment
- Low Maintenance
- Little time to learn
- Little space required

This makes it ideal for those seeking a simple creative outlet.

Plus, it’s healthy for you.

No kidding, when you start your whittling journey, you’ll see that your focus becomes pretty intense. They say this provides a therapeutic escape from the stresses of the real world.

It's the rhythmic motion of whittling wood that brings on this mindfulness. This meditative aspect is often one of the key reasons individuals stick with whittling.

And, let's not forget the satisfaction of creating something tangible - with your hands - I still find it fascinating.

Whittling gives you that instant gratification simply from carving small decorative items or useful household objects. That sense of accomplishment that comes from transforming a simple piece of wood into a finished product will always put a grin on your face.

Hone your skills and you'll find joy in the gradual improvement. Each piece gets better as your knowledge grows.

All that, affordable, and you can take it with you too? Definitely, but there's more!

Here's all you'll need to start your whittling journey...

Create Art with an idea, a piece of wood and a pocketknife

The simple single-bladed, folding pocketknife has been cutting fingers off since it was first invented.

Start your whittling journey by keeping ALL your finger!



We'll get into the knives and species of woods best for whittling in a minute. First, I'd like to show you how to stay safe.

A glove on the hand that's holding the wood and a thumb guard on the other is usually enough to keep you safe from serious harm.

If you're brand new to whittling, I highly suggest the Level 5 stuff. It won't stop a stab. However, They'll stop the blade from slicing through.

You can learn more about protecting yourself here: [Whittling Safety](#).

Once safety is in order, grab a pencil and paper.

Draw out your idea

Can't draw? Go Here: [Draw for Whittling](#)

But, even if you can draw, drawing for whittling can differ from drawing on paper. First of all, it's wood!

Wood can be difficult to draw on if it's not smooth or it's a twig covered with bark. Second, you'll be removing everything you draw on the wood with your knife. It's nice to have a picture to look at for features.

Draw out your idea and use it for reference.

Now, you're going to need a piece of wood to whittle.

What wood, would you whittle, if you wanted to whittle wood?

Sounds like a silly question but it's asked a lot. The answers usually the same.

A stick will work. Willow branches are soft. A chunk of black walnut will, more then likely, be very hard.

Then, there's basswood.

It's just right! Even better, mist a little water on the basswood to make it softer while you whittle. However, there's several good species to start with. Then, there's some you might want to hold off on.

Everything is explained here: [Whittling Wood](#)

But, you still need a trustworthy, comfortable, extremely sharp knife to whittle that wood.

So, what knife is best to start your whittling journey?

Looking back, I'd say, "that's the wrong question to be asking."

Instead, and with some experience, you'll start asking, "What knife or knives are best for this project?" Because, all knives are not created equal.

People have been whittling with the common 1-4 blade pocketknife, and the larger straight knives for decades.

You can whittle with a sharp stone if you're ambitious enough.

And, while a small lock-blade folding knife - that will hold its edge - can be all that's needed to start your whittling journey, I'd like to show you something a little different.

What we're about to discuss here, will probably change the way you look at knives. That's because these are knives specifically designed for whittling.

These knives come razor sharp from the manufacturer. The blades hold a sharp edge with little maintenance. The blades are designed for both, deep cutting and smooth slicing. Best of all, they're comfortable to use.

I'm only going to mention three manufacturers, real quick.

Flexcut - These are the knives I use. I'll be giving you a full run down on them and the ones I don't use from Flexcut.

Beaver Craft – I’ve never used their knives. It’s my understanding that they’re top notch according to what other whittlers have to say. I’ve ordered other whittling items from Beaver Craft with no complaints. And, they do have a lot to offer the whittling community.

Pfiel – I haven’t used their knives, but I have used their gouges. If you do get into wood carving, you’ll want their chisels and gouges in your tool box. These things are wicked sharp. And they’re solid.

Of course, there are many more trusted names out there. These are the companies I’ve used at Whittle Bit of Everything. There’s also a few individuals that make custom whittling knives. Unfortunately, I don’t have a list of these people. I do know they offer quality knives though.

I believe the best advice I can give anyone here is, stick to quality! My little Flexcut Cutting Knife has given me years of pleasure (and service.)

We’ll talk about Flexcut and choosing a whittling knife here: [Whittling Knife](#)

Here’s How To Keep Your Blade Sharp

Blade sharpness is all about the edge. A sharp knife has a fine, clean edge that can easily slice through wood. Over time, this edge can become dull.

Using the knife, cutting through tough materials, or even improper storage can all contribute to dullness. A dull knife requires more force to cut, which can lead to mistakes or accidents. It also makes whittling less enjoyable.

Stropping is a key part of knife maintenance.

Stropping involves polishing the edge of the blade using a strop, typically made of leather. The strop helps to straighten and refine the edge, removing any microscopic burrs or imperfections.

This process is quick, easy, and highly effective. Learn more about stropping your knife here: [Whittling Strop](#)

Now, you're sharp, the idea's burning a hole in your brain and with something to whittle on, it helps to know the techniques of whittling.

Here's a few basic whittling techniques

Having the right tools won't help without knowing how to use them. Start by learning how to hold the knife properly; this usually involves a grip that allows for both control and comfort.

The most common whittling strokes include the push cut, where you push the blade away from you, and the pull cut, where you draw the knife towards you. A stop cut, keeps the blade from cutting through.

- Roughing, is taking away larger sections of wood.
- Cutting is the process of adding the details.
- Detailing means fine tuning the details.

It sounds intimidating. Really, it's not. It's just a matter of practicing the techniques. Knowing what you're talking about just makes you look smarter.

More on that here: [Whittling Tech & Terms](#).

This is How to Master Whittling Faster



You've suddenly become a wizard. You're magic is unparalleled. This whittling thing you do, has people standing around in awe. Here's what you do.

One of the most rewarding aspects of whittling is the opportunity to share your skills. Teaching others is going to strengthen your own skills and understanding.

Just like you, beginners need to start with simple projects that are easy to complete and offer a sense of accomplishment. Sound familiar? So, why not teach as you learn?

Start a small group. Set a time to meet. Show what you know.

These initial successes will build your confidence and spark a greater interest in the craft.

Keep in mind, when teaching others your new found “magical” skills:

- Make sure that beginners understand the importance of using sharp tools correctly, maintaining a safe carving environment, and wearing protective gear as needed.
- Emphasize the significance of proper knife handling techniques to prevent injuries.
- Providing a comprehensive safety briefing before starting any project that sets a positive tone and assure everyone that their well-being is a top priority.

And here, you'll have a great project to get them started with...

Your First Whittling Artwork

This is THE COOLEST whittle piece of artwork you're going to create.

Mostly, because it's probably your first time whittling. Plus, you'll have all the steps - even how to draw it on the wood - to get started.

You can see it here: [Project Part 1](#).

The Business End Of Whittling

I'm not going to try convincing you to start a whittling business. It's a lot of work. Fun, but still a lot of work. Instead, I wanted to show you what to do, just in case, you ran out of room for whittling.

Or, maybe you do want a successful whittling business and don't know how to start. I for one, see no reason why you shouldn't begin that journey now. There's a few things that must be done - required by law - but mostly, it's knowing what your customers want.

You can see all about the business of whittling here: [Business of Whittling](#)

It All Boils Down To This...

You can read the information, learn everything you can, as quickly as you can about whittling, put in the time, do the work, build your knowledge, and master whittling...

The desire is obviously there, or you wouldn't be here...

Or, you can keep doing what you've been doing all along.

That choice is yours. I've learned that whittling is not for everyone. If you have medical issues in your hands and wrists, whittling might be difficult to master. That doesn't mean you can't find out.

So, if you're still following along, go here: [Whittling Safety](#), and find out how to keep all those lovely fingers you have.

Whittling Safety

How To Keep All Your Finger Tips. Plus, we're going to show you how to keep others safe when whittling.



Whittling safety is probably the most important topic we'll discuss. Only because, whittling might be a wonderful and relaxing hobby, but it's an activity involving extremely sharp tools. Safety should always be a top priority.

Yes, you can enjoy whittling while still keeping all your fingers. Here's some tips to ensure you and those around you stay safe.

The Knife MUST Be Sharp

If you're looking for a miserable whittling experience whittle with a dull blade. Having a sharp blade is essential as they require less force, reducing the risk of slipping. Dull blades, on the other hand, can be dangerous as they need more pressure, you're increasing the likelihood of an accident. Start sharp!

Use Proper Techniques

Knowing proper whittling techniques can significantly enhance your safety. Always carve away from your body to prevent accidental cuts. Hold the wood securely with your non-dominant hand and make controlled, deliberate cuts with your dominant hand. Use your non-dominant thumb to push and guide the blade as well. Additionally, make sure to use a carving glove on the hand holding the wood to protect it from accidental slips.

Choose the Right Wood

For beginners, selecting the right type of wood is important for both your safety and the quality of your work. Softwoods like basswood and pine are easier to carve and put less strain on your hands and tools. Avoid using hardwoods until you are more experienced, as they can be challenging to work with and increase the risk of accidents. Just don't avoid carving them completely.

At some point, you'll find green wood. A fresh cut hardwood blank can be carved. The problem you might run into is cracks. As the wood dries, it shrinks. It doesn't always shrink like you planned it to. However, this is less of a problem with the smaller blanks.

Maintain a Clean Workspace

Whittling is messy. No doubt, keeping a clean and organized workspace can help prevent accidents. Ensure your work area is well-lit and free of clutter. Keep your tools within easy reach but safely stored when not in use.

When whittling outside your normal work area, an apron and cardboard box comes in handy. Wear the apron. Drape the apron over the box. Using controlled cuts, you should be able to aim most of the pieces onto the apron or into the box. Use a broom for the ones that miss.

Stay Focused

Before you begin and before you switch to a new cut, check your surroundings. You're about to be mesmerized by your own creation. Before you realize it, wood chips fly, animals wander and children reach. Yes, it's going to happen to you. Know what's going on around you.

Also, always be mindful of where your hands and tools are. I once had a chisel slide cleanly across a piece I was working on. Unfortunately, there was no stop cut and my thumb was on top of the board. It was fast. But I watched in slow motion as the chisel sliced my thumb open.

If you feel tired or unfocused, take a break. Fatigue will lead to mistakes. Usually the worst of them.

Wear Protective Gear

Not wearing a Level 5 cut-resistant glove and thumb guard when whittling is stupid! There, I said it. I can say it because I sometimes whittle without them. When I don't, there's always the thought of, "This is really stupid" in my head. Learn more about gloves and thumb guards here: [Level-5](#)

First, the Level 5 cut-resistant glove and thumb guard are super cheap, compared to stitches. Second, I despise pain. Especially, when said pain is self inflicted, because of stupidity. I guess that's a natural reaction. Most important, whittling, wood carving and chainsaw carving are my livelihood. If I don't carve, I'm going to starve. I want to keep my body parts. Hopefully you do as well.

In addition to using a carving glove, wearing protective eye gear can further enhance your safety. Protect your eyes from wood chips and debris..

First Aid Preparedness

Of course, always have a first aid kit nearby. Accidents can happen, even with the best precautions in place. Being prepared with bandages, antiseptic wipes, and other first aid supplies ensures you can quickly address any minor injuries that may occur.

When doing any whittling, even if it's just because it's fun, I'll have a few band-aids close. Three minimum. I have cut myself when whittling. Pretty deep too. The blades on my Flexcut Cutting Knife is sharp enough to go bone deep in a finger with very little effort. From this experience, I know one band-aid isn't enough.

A good whittling specific first-aid kit can be put together quick. Then just keep it with your kit so it's always handy.

Whittling Safety Checklist

[Whittling Safety Checklist](#)

1. Use sharp, well-maintained knives.
2. Carve away from your body.
3. Wear a carving glove and thumb guard
4. Select softwoods for easier carving.
5. Keep your workspace clean and organized.
6. Ensure proper lighting in your work area.
7. Stay focused and avoid distractions.
8. Take breaks if you feel tired or unfocused.
9. Protect your eyes
10. Have a first aid kit readily available.

It's a simple checklist you can use as a guide to minimizing the risk of injury. Remember, safety is paramount, and taking the necessary precautions will ensure that your whittling experience is both enjoyable and safe.

Before folks start calling you Stumpy, let's have a closer look at those Level 5 gloves and thumb guards. It's a short read at: [Level-5](#)

Level 5 cut-resistant gloves and thumb guards

If You Can't Imagine Going Through Life Being Called STUMPY, Read This Before You Start Whittling

Serious Protection for Whittlers And Wood Carvers

Adding some simple self preservation to a whittlers tool box costs considerably less then the emergency room visit for stitches. A knife, sharp enough to cut into wood, is going to be sharp enough to cut into your finger or worse, Stumpy. Oh yes, of course I'm trying to scare you enough to wear the glove!

Level 5 cut-resistant gloves to be specific.

This is especially true if you're just starting your whittling journey. I started out with two gloves - left and right to be exact. Two reasons, first, I didn't want to lose a finger. But the gloves also kept the wood clean. So, second, my hands always seem to be dirty.

The oils from your skin will gel with the dirt in your skin and then it gets into the wood. This is easily cleaned off with a little soap and water. I don't want to see it when whittling. This kind of forces me to put the gloves on.

Enough about me. Let's get into the gloves.

Level 5 cut-resistant gloves are designed to withstand slashes and reduce the risk of accidental injuries. While these gloves do not protect against punctures from pointed tools, they effectively prevent cuts from slipping blades.

Typically made from materials like Kevlar, stainless steel, or high-performance polyethylene (HPPE), They'll provide robust protection while maintaining flexibility and comfort.

Typically in the \$20 - \$30 range, investing in a pair of Level 5 cut-resistant gloves is a smart choice. Even with years of experience, I still reach for my

gloves before whittling. They provide essential protection while allowing the dexterity needed for detailed work.

Now, Let's Talk Thumb Guards

The thumb guard does just what it sounds like - Protects the thumb! These are used on the dominant hand. Mostly, they're used to protect from a pull cut getting away from you. This too will eventually happen.

When that blade enters your thumb, you'll see stars. Speaking from experience here - It hurts!

Want to hear something really stupid?

I did it more than once!

Get this, you can make one by placing a piece of leather on your thumbprint area, then wrap duct tape around it. It'll slide on and off easily once the glue from the tape wears off.

Seriously though, the gloves and thumb guards are cheap. Super cheap if you consider the cost of emergency rooms.

Drawing for Whittling and Wood Carving - Simplified

Tell me, this isn't a better, easier, softer way to learn how to draw. Especially if you find drawing to be an extremely difficult task. Stressful even! Stick Figures Are Your Friend.



I started with stick figures!

No kidding.

I couldn't draw. Stick figures with "accessories" (as I called them) worked for me, because it gave me the correct proportions for the figure. Figuring out the details, such as the eyes, nose and mouth took a little longer, but you'll get there too.

Eventually, my drawing of these super human (and animal) stick figures was passable enough for art.

That said, the importance of bettering your drawing skills to improve your whittling isn't rocket science. A solid foundation in drawing gives you the ability to visualize and plan your designs with greater accuracy and creativity. This foresight will significantly enhance the overall quality and precision of your carvings, transforming raw pieces of wood into intricate works of art.

While traditional drawing focuses on creating two-dimensional representations, drawing for wood carving involves a unique set of considerations. It is essential to think in three dimensions, taking into account the depth, texture, and grain of the wood.

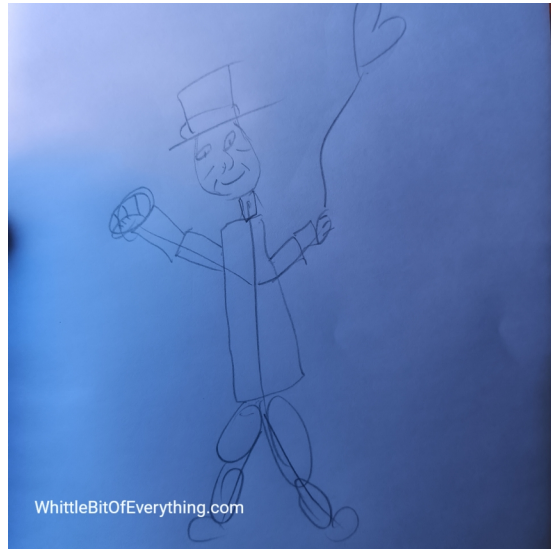
This approach allows you to anticipate how your designs will look in it's final stages, ensuring that each cut and chisel stroke gives with the intended outcome.

On the technical side, you'll have a better understanding of proportion, perspective, and anatomy. These elements help create balanced and realistic designs that are feasible to carve. Having a keen eye for details and creative mindset will enable you to infuse your work with personality and flair.

By bridging the gap between conceptualization and execution, drawing allows you to plan meticulously and execute flawlessly.

But, since you're here because you can't draw, let's get you the basics.

Basic Drawing Techniques for Beginners



Like I said, I started with stick figures, and started adding shapes, as I saw them.

For instance, most heads are oval, whereas a torso is more of a rectangle. Eventually, I could turn those shapes into fingers, toes and other details.

These “foundational techniques” serve as the base upon which more complex designs can be built on. Basic shapes and lines can be combined to form more intricate designs.

Try it. Practice drawing circles, squares, and triangles, and see how these shapes can serve as the framework for more detailed patterns. Then do a line.

Lines are another fundamental element. Being able to draw straight lines, curved lines, and various types of edges will significantly enhance your ability to sketch out designs to whittle.

Start by practicing with a pencil on paper

Focusing on maintaining the consistency and fluidity of your lines. Different types of lines, such as hatching and cross-hatching, can be used to create textures and shading, adding depth to your drawings.

Shading can literally bring your sketches to life. By varying the pressure on your pencil, you can create different shades of light and dark, giving your design a three-dimensional appearance. This is particularly important in carving, where depth and dimension are crucial.

Practice shading by drawing simple objects and gradually adding layers of light and dark to achieve a realistic effect.

Understanding perspective allows you to create drawings that appear more lifelike and accurate. Begin by learning the basics of one-point and two-point perspective, which can help you draw objects that recede into the distance. This skill is invaluable when designing more complex wood carving projects, as it ensures that all elements of your design are proportionate and well-balanced.

With practice, these foundational skills will become second nature, paving the way for more advanced and intricate designs.

Advanced Drawing Techniques for Detailed Wood Carving Projects

You'll be creating detailed textures in your carvings. Textures can bring a sense of realism and depth to your piece. Start by observing real-life textures and practice drawing them on paper.

Pay attention to how light and shadow interact with different surfaces. If you're drawing a tree bark texture, use fine lines to represent the roughness and irregularities of the bark. Utilize cross-hatching and stippling techniques to add dimension and depth.

To draw intricate patterns, begin with a simple geometric shape or a repeating pattern. Gradually build upon this base by adding more details and variations.

Symmetry and repetition are key elements in creating aesthetically pleasing patterns. It might be helpful to use graph paper or digital drawing tools to ensure accuracy and consistency in your designs.

Intricate designs often involve a high level of detail and precision. Break down the image into smaller, more manageable parts. Start by outlining the major elements, then progressively fill in the details. This step-by-step approach makes it easier to maintain proportion and balance.

Additionally, consider using reference images to guide your work and offer inspiration.

As you become more adept at drawing detailed textures, complex patterns, and intricate designs, you will find your wood carving skills advancing in tandem.

Inspiration and Design Ideas

Any project often begins with a spark of inspiration. Personally, I like coloring books. The simple line drawings are easiest to copy onto the wood with a pencil.

Nature-inspired themes are always popular. These designs often feature elements such as leaves, flowers, animals, and landscapes. The organic shapes and natural beauty Mother Nature offers can transform a simple piece of wood into a stunning work of art.

Observing the natural world, taking photographs, or even sketching outdoors can be excellent ways to gather ideas for these themes.

Geometric patterns, with their clean lines and symmetrical forms, offer a different kind of aesthetic appeal. These designs can range from simple shapes to complex, interlocking patterns. They require precision and attention to detail, making them a favorite among carvers who enjoy a challenge.

To find inspiration, look at architectural details, textile patterns, or even mathematical concepts.

Traditional carvings often reflect cultural heritage and historical artistry. These designs can include Celtic knots, tribal symbols, or classical

sculptures. Studying different cultures and their wood carving traditions can provide a wealth of inspiration.

Museums and cultural exhibitions are valuable resources for those seeking to incorporate traditional elements into their projects.

Sometimes, you can take something old, and just turn it into something new. Transform an existing design by adding your unique touch or combining elements from multiple sources to create something original.

The key is to remain open to new ideas and willing to experiment.

Here's why I prefer drawing on the wood versus transferring it.

Transferring Your Drawings to Wood

In the beginning, I'd spent hours trying to figure out how to transfer a drawing from paper to wood. Eventually, I'd figured out it was quicker just to draw it on the wood. I did learn a few tricks though.

If you must do a transfer, before doing anything, make sure the wood surface is smooth and free of debris, as imperfections can disrupt the transfer process.

Also, it helps to secure your drawing and transfer materials firmly to prevent any shifting. And, it helps to work in a well-lit area to clearly see the details of your design and the transfer process.

One of the most common techniques is using carbon paper.

To use this method, place a sheet of carbon paper between your drawing and the wood surface. Carefully trace over your design with a pen or pencil, applying consistent pressure to ensure the carbon transfers the drawing onto the wood. This method is highly effective for intricate designs, offering precision and clarity.

Downside? I always destroy the carbon. It smudges. I can never seem to find it.

Another reliable technique involves tracing paper.

First, trace your drawing onto the tracing paper. Next, flip the tracing paper over and place it onto the wooden surface. Rub the back of the tracing paper with a blunt object or a burnishing tool to transfer the graphite or ink onto the wood. This method allows for flexibility, as you can adjust and reposition the tracing paper until the design is perfectly aligned.

Most - keyword there - of the lines will come through. Most! The smaller details usually do not. And again, you can't use it on an oddly shaped piece of wood. For instance, the one you just started whittling.

So, I just draw the picture on the wood and start whittling. After doing it a few times, you can almost skip the drawing part.

You just keep getting better



This is a Pre-Drawing for ideas for a chainsaw carving. If you're whittling ever turns into a business, this is what you'll be doing.

By practicing basic drawing techniques, you can develop a keen eye for detail and a better understanding of proportions. As you advance, integrating more complex designs and patterns into your drawings will allow for greater creativity and precision in your carvings.

To progress from beginner to advanced levels, it is essential to maintain a consistent practice routine.

- Start with simple shapes and lines, gradually moving on to more intricate designs.

- Utilize a variety of drawing tools and experiment with different styles to find what works best for you.

- Incorporating drawing exercises into your daily routine will not only improve your skills but also boost your confidence in executing detailed wood carving projects.

As you continue to refine your drawing abilities, begin to apply these skills directly to your wood carving endeavors.

Use your drawings as blueprints, guiding your hands as you bring your designs to life in the wood. This integration of drawing and carving will enhance the precision and quality of your work, resulting in more sophisticated and intricate pieces.

Remember, the journey to mastering anything is continuous. Embrace experimentation, learn from your mistakes, and celebrate your progress.







The more you draw and carve, the more adept you will become at transforming your creative visions into tangible art. With dedication and practice, you will achieve mastery and create wood carvings that truly reflect your artistic prowess.

Let's Draw

Here' we have a very simple wood spirit. It's been whittled out using some triangles for the pattern. I used a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch dowel if you'd like to try whittling it. The dowels I get are usually poplar wood. It's a bit harder, but you can get a lot of whittles from a single dowel.



Here's how we draw it on the wood - Step by step.

 <p>Rectangle represents your block of wood</p>	 <p>1. The eyes</p>	 <p>2. The nose</p>
 <p>3. The nostrils</p>	 <p>4. The Mustache</p>	 <p>5. The mouth</p>



6. The hair



7. The Beard



That's it!

And now, let's go find out about basswood and those other species: [Wood Species](#).

Wood For Whittling

There's no one wood species for whittling. Find out which species is best, and the projects it's best suited for.



WhittleBitOfEverything.com

Obviously, wood for comes in many species. We've already figured that out. Several projects can easily be whittled from a twig. However, we're going to focus on a few wood species that many whittlers prefer.

You'll see why too. Two of them are generally for a more advanced whittler. But, because of the grain, colors and ability to take details very well, they have to be mentioned. First...

A Quick tip, that's going to save you from sore hands, before we begin:

Dampen the block of wood with water to soften the surface wood. A misting bottle works wonders. There are other solutions you'll find or hear about for this. I've found that water is almost always available. Plus, I try to stay away from chemicals.

And now, here's the list...

List of Wood For Whittling

Basswood

Of course, we're going to talk about basswood. Also called, NAME FOR BASSWOOD. It's my go-to wood for whittling. Especially for the little projects I use to figure out a chainsaw carving. Its fine grain and softness make it incredibly easy to carve.

Pros:

- Ease of carving: Its soft texture allows for smooth cuts, making it perfect for detailed work.
- Availability: Basswood is widely available and relatively inexpensive.
- Fine grain: The wood's fine grain means fewer chances of splintering.

Cons:

- Softness: While its softness is an advantage, it can also be a drawback as it may not hold fine details as well as harder woods.

- Durability: Finished pieces may not be as durable due to the wood's softness.

When To Use:

- Carving small figurines
- Creating detailed carvings
- Crafting utensils

Butternut

Next, consider butternut, a close relative to walnut. It shares many of basswood's favorable characteristics but has a slightly richer color.

Pros:

- Easy to carve: Similar to basswood, butternut is soft and easy to work with.
- Aesthetic appeal: Its light brown color and attractive grain make it visually appealing.
- Lightweight: Butternut is relatively light, which is great for larger projects.

Cons:

- Softness: Like basswood, butternut's softness can be a double-edged sword, leading to less durable carvings.
- Availability: It might not be as readily available as basswood, depending on your location.

When To Use:

- Sculpting decorative bowls
- Whittling intricate totems
- Making lightweight boxes

Pine

Transitioning to pine, this wood is another favorite among whittlers. It is slightly harder than basswood and butternut but still manageable for beginners.

Pros:

- Workability: Pine is easy to carve and can be found in various grades.
- Affordability: It's often less expensive, making it a cost-effective choice for practice.
- Aromatic: Some pine varieties have a pleasant aroma, adding to the carving experience.

Cons:

- Knotty texture: Pine can have knots, which might be challenging to carve around.
- Sap: It can be sappy, which might make your tools sticky.

When To Use:

- Carving simple toys
- Whittling larger projects
- Crafting rustic pieces

Cherry

Moving on, cherry wood offers a step up in terms of hardness. It is favored for its beautiful color and smooth finish.

Pros:

- Aesthetic quality: Cherry has a lovely reddish-brown color that deepens with age.
- Smooth finish: It takes on a very smooth and polished finish, ideal for refined projects.
- Strength: Cherry is harder and more durable than basswood or butternut.

Cons:

- Harder to carve: Its increased hardness can be challenging for beginners.
- Cost: Cherry wood is generally more expensive than softer woods.

When To Use:

- Making ornate handles for tools
- Creating custom inlay work
- Whittling decorative plaques

Walnut

Additionally, walnut is another excellent choice for more experienced whittlers. Its rich color and fine grain make it a popular choice for detailed projects.

Pros:

- Beauty: Walnut has a rich, dark color and a fine, even grain.
- Durability: It is quite durable and holds fine details well.
- Versatility: Suitable for both small and large projects.

Cons:

- Difficulty: Its hardness can be tough on tools and require more effort to carve.
- Cost: Walnut is often pricier than other woods, reflecting its quality.

When To Use:

- Crafting heirloom-quality jewelry boxes
- Whittling high-end chess pieces
- Making detailed sculptures

Explore Walnut Products:

- Amazon.com Beaver Craft Walnut Wood For Whittling

This list should get you started. Each wood species offers unique characteristics. A simple question to ask yourself is, "Does the project need ease of carving, aesthetic appeal, or durability?" In most cases, basswood is going to work.

Of course, you're going to need a knife. A very sharp knife. A knife you're going to want to tell your friends about. Brag about even! It's a knife that good. Which knife do I recommend, and why? Let's find out here: [Whittling Knives](#)

Flexcut Knives

Flexcut whittling knives are what I use in my business. Yes, I can Highly Recommend them. Here's why...



My experience with Flexcut knives began when someone gifted me a the Flexcut Deluxe Carving Set. Since then, I've used them to go from a hobby whittler, with no idea what I was doing, to a professional chainsaw carver - that, in some cases, still has no idea what he's doing.

We figure it out don't we!

As for Flexcut,

- I started with them.
- I break them.
- They're the ones I replace the broken ones with.

I'd say they work just fine.

That's because Flexcut is a distinguished name in the realm of wood carving and whittling. They're celebrated for superior-quality tools and inventive designs.

Established in 1986, Flexcut has consistently delivered reliable and efficient tools to woodworkers. This has earned them a solid reputation for excellence. The company's commitment to craftsmanship is evident in every product. And, that's not all.

Flexcut's dedication to innovation is showcased in its diverse product line.

Stick with wood carving long enough and you'll learn more about the carving knives, gouges, chisels, and a variety of specialized tools tailored to specific carving techniques, offered by Flexcut.

But, the feature I want to focus on here is Flexcut tools edge-holding ability.

As long as I'm not dropping these tools, I've never have to put a new edge on them with a sharpening stone. I only have to keep them sharp using a strop. You'll understand all this when you learn Stropping.

The high-carbon steel used in the blades ensures that they remain sharp for extended periods. Less time sharpening means more time whittling.

Plus, the handles are designed for comfort and control, making it easier for you to achieve more intricate details in your work. The normal pains that come with the long hours of pocketknife whittling lesson considerably.

I have big hands. These handles set in my palm. I noticed, when using a pocketknife, the knife set more in my fingers. I had to squeeze tighter, making releasing them a chore when done whittling.

You'll also find that Flexcut's commitment extends beyond the tools themselves.

The company offers a range of educational resources, including instructional videos and detailed guides, to help improve your skills, maintain your equipment and get the most out of their tools.

In short, This dedication to supporting the woodworking community has solidified Flexcut's position as a trusted and respected brand in the industry.

Let's take a look at the Flexcut knives I'm using. There's a few. You'll want them all. It's inevitable. They are tools after all.

Each has a purpose.



Flexcut Roughing Knife

The roughing knife is used to remove substantial amounts of wood fast. This knife is engineered specifically for the initial stages of carving, where bulk wood removal is necessary to create the rough outline of a piece. The blade is wider and longer, providing the leverage needed to cut through larger chunks of wood easier.

Flexcut Cutting Knife

The cutting knife offers the best of both worlds with some limitations. It has a shorter blade, giving it some detailing capabilities. These capabilities make the Flexcut Cutting Knife ideal for roughing out shapes and refining intricate details.

Flexcut Detail Knife

The detail knife has narrow blade. This blade design ensures that even the most delicate features and patterns can be executed with ease and accuracy.

I actually wasn't going to get one. I use chisels now, mostly. But, I wanted a second cutting knife to keep in my van. Instead of ordering one, I ordered the set. They should just make this mandatory to begin with.

I really can't say enough good things about these knives!!! But, there's more. Flexcut has folding knives too.

More Flexcut Knives

Now, I don't use these. I had a Carvin' Jack, but gave it away to a new whittler. Loved it. But, I was getting more into chainsaw carving at the time. Figured I'll eventually get another one.

They're practical, for sure. A little pricey compared to the straight knives. But, they are kind of an all-in-one.

Flexcut JKN95 Tri-Jack Pro

Get three blades in one tool. The Tri-Jack Pro features three distinct blades - a detail knife, a roughing knife, and a mini cutting knife. This combination allows you to handle a variety of carving tasks without having to switch tools constantly.

With its compact design, the Tri-Jack Pro is perfect for carving on the go. Slip it into your pocket or bag and take it with you wherever inspiration strikes.

Carvin' Jack

Need 6 blades? The Carvin' Jack features six different blades, including a detail knife, straight gouge, chisel, V-scorp, gouge scorp, and hook knife. With this variety, you can tackle any carving project with ease.

It's like having a complete carving set in your pocket!

Spoon Carvin' Jack

The Spoon Carvin' Jack 2.0 comes with a hook knife for hollowing and a straight carving knife for shaping. These blades are all you need to craft beautiful, functional spoons.

Like I said, these are All-In-One style whittling knives. What I didn't care for on the Carvin' Jack was the difficulty I (personally) had getting the blades out. Big hands. Remember?

But, like their straight knives, the blades were wicked sharp! This just made me smile.

And, oh yes, there's more...

Other Products from Flexcut

It's not just whittling knives, Flexcut offers an extensive range of wood carving tools and accessories that cater to both amateur and professional wood carvers.

Flexcut gouges are particularly popular due to their precision and durability. Available in various profiles and sizes, these tools are designed to handle intricate detailing and deep cuts with ease. The gouges are constructed from high-carbon steel, ensuring long-lasting sharpness and resilience against wear and tear. This makes them ideal for tasks that require meticulous attention to detail, such as relief carving and sculpting.

Chisels from Flexcut are another essential addition to any woodworker's toolkit. Known for their ergonomic handles and razor-sharp blades, these chisels provide excellent control and comfort, even during prolonged use.

They are perfect for tasks that involve shaping and smoothing wood surfaces, dovetailing, and general woodworking. The blend of durability and ease of use makes Flexcut chisels a favorite among woodworkers seeking precision and efficiency.

Carving sets offered by Flexcut provide a comprehensive solution for those looking to embark on detailed carving projects. These sets typically include a variety of tools such as knives, gouges, and chisels, all housed in a convenient carrying case.

The sets are designed to offer versatility and flexibility, enabling woodworkers to tackle a wide range of projects from start to finish. Whether you are working on a large sculpture or a small decorative piece, these carving sets ensure you have the right tool at hand.

Now, I know this is a Whittling Guide. But, I do love tools. Especially great tools. And, I sincerely hope that you also get into wood carving. And, why not... grab a chainsaw. Just be safe. That's really all I ask.

And, I'm going to help you stay safe, as best I can.

It doesn't matter what brand name or style knife you're using. If you're using a knife - and we may as well say FOR ANY REASON - make sure it's sharp.

And that's where a strop comes on real handy. More on stropping here: [Whittling Strop](#)

Whittling Strop

This Is The - Why, How And When - For Keeping A Super Sharp Whittling Knife. If You're Looking For Deeper, Cleaner Cuts And Smoother Slices When Whittling - Read This:



WhittleBitOfEverything.com

The strop is a pretty handy tool to have. Put a piece of leather on a block of wood, add some polishing compound and start stropping your blade. Simple. Right?

Here's why keeping your knife sharp, as a beginner, seems so frustrating – It's New!

That's it. It's just something you're not familiar with. And, here's how you get familiar with stropping...

First, you learn how to do it. You'll find that information below. Then you do it. You're not making the blade. You're just keeping it sharp. Follow along.

Why Stropping?

While sharpening stones hone the blade by grinding away material, stropping polishes and aligns the edge to a razor-sharp finish. This process removes microscopic burrs and refines the edge, making your knife perform better and last longer.

So you see, you're not taking off layers. You're just cleaning up the edge of those layers. Typically, stropping only takes a few seconds.

There are some cases where I've had to put a new edge on a chisel or gouge. I once dropped a gouge from the top of the ladder to a concrete floor. This chipped the gouge. No stropping here. I had to put a whole new edge on it. Then, that edge gets sharpened. Then I stropped it.

And, to be honest, I threw it away. I could not get that same edge that came from the factory.

But, for those blades that haven't met their doom, I'll tell you what I do. First, here's what stropping is going to do for you:

- Give you an incredibly sharp blade, making your cuts clean and precise.
- Let you use less force, reducing the risk of slips and accidents.
- Reduce the need for more aggressive sharpening, preserving the life of your knife.

That's a pretty sweet deal for a few seconds of loving labor, so let's begin.

How to Strop Your Whittling Knife

1. Choose or make your Strop

Flexcut has strops designed specifically for carving tools. These are perfect if you're also going to be using Flexcut carving tools. Or, you can make your own by gluing some leather to a piece of wood. Or, you could simply place the leather on a hard surface.

2. Apply Stropping Compound

These stropping compounds usually come in stick form, resembling a square crayon. You just start scribbling a small amount to the leather surface of your strop. Keep a compound free area, or have a second strop (you will) to do the next step twice.

3. Strop the Blade: Hold your knife at a consistent angle (typically around 15-20 degrees) and draw the blade away from the edge, keeping light pressure. Repeat this motion several times on each side. The goal is to polish, not grind, so gentle strokes are key.

Once polished, I strop the blade on a second compound free strop. This gets any unwanted compound off the blade and does seem to add to the sharpness.

That's it. Not much to it, is there?

You'll find that most of the stuff you'll learn on your whittling journey is not all that complicated. It's just "magic" to those who don't want to learn it. Be the magician... Know when to strop!

When To Strop

Make it a habit to inspect and strop your knife after every carving session. You may have to stop to strop while whittling, once in a while, But, this is going to depend on what you're whittling and which species you're whittling on.

I'll typically strop before, during and after whittling.

Before, because the strop is right there next to the knives. It's just become a habit to pick them both up, admire them, and strop away. During, because most whittling I do now is 8 hours or better. And yes, my hands still hurt after. Thanks for asking. But then, I do my inspection and a quick strop, before I put everything away.

Really, you'll be happy to know, these knives don't cost much and they're solid. I've dropped mine several times - fortunately without incident. As long as they don't get chipped, stropping has always brought the edge back.

Don't over-complicate anything whittling. It's all easy. At least once you know some basic techniques and what all the fancy words mean. You're about to find out, right here: [Whittling Techniques](#)

Whittling Techniques and Terminology

Tech & Terms... The How-To and “What Did They Just Say” of Whittling. It’s Where The Fun Begins!



WhittleBitOfEverything.com

Whittling techniques are pretty straight forward. Whittling terminology might leave you a little stumped at first. You're obviously a quick learner.

So, let's expand that knowledge base of yours with a few choice words.

Knowing them might not get you a diploma, but it sure makes you look smart around those not in the know.

These Are Your Basic Whittling Techniques

Pare Cut - Pull Cut

The pare cut is similar to peeling a potato. Hold the wood in your non-dominant hand and the knife in your dominant hand. Use your thumb to push the knife through the wood while pulling the wood towards you. This cut is great for removing large shavings and shaping your piece. When performing a pare cut, ensure that your thumb provides a steady, controlled push to avoid slipping and creating uneven cuts.

Sweep Cut - Push Cut

For the push cut, hold the knife with both hands, thumbs bracing against each other. Push the knife away from you into the wood. This method provides control and is ideal for detailing. The push cut is excellent for creating smooth surfaces and refining the overall shape of your carving. Remember to keep your fingers away from the path of the blade to maintain safety.

Stop Cut

The stop cut is used to control where your knife stops cutting. Make a straight cut down into the wood, then use a second cut to remove wood up to the stop cut. This technique is essential for carving precise features and details. Stop cuts are particularly useful when creating sharp corners or edges, as they prevent the knife from overshooting and damaging the surrounding wood.

V-Cut

Create a V-cut by making two angled cuts that meet at a point. This technique is useful for carving grooves or creating textures. V-cuts are often employed in decorative carving to add depth and intricacy to the design. Practice controlling the depth and angle of your cuts to achieve the desired effect.

Scoring

Scoring involves making light cuts along a line to guide deeper cuts. This is helpful for outlining patterns or designs on your wood. Scoring is a preliminary step that ensures your deeper cuts follow the intended path, reducing the risk of mistakes. Use a light touch to avoid splintering the wood while scoring.

Chipping

Chipping involves removing small pieces of wood to create patterns or textures. This technique is often used in chip carving, a decorative form of whittling. By varying the size and depth of your chips, you can create intricate designs and add dimension to your work.

Some More Whittling Terminology

Blank

A blank is the raw piece of wood from which you start your carving. Blanks can be purchased pre-cut or you can prepare your own from larger pieces of wood. Selecting the right blank is crucial, as different woods have varying hardness and grain patterns that can affect your carving experience.

Grain

The grain of the wood refers to the direction of the wood fibers. Working with the grain usually produces smoother cuts and reduces the risk of splitting the wood. Understanding the grain direction is essential for achieving clean cuts and avoiding frustrating breaks.

Green Wood

Green wood is freshly cut and still retains moisture, making it easier to carve. However, it can crack or warp as it dries. Carving green wood can be advantageous for beginners due to its softness, but be mindful of the drying process to prevent damage to your finished piece.

Hardwood vs. Softwood

Hardwoods, like oak or maple, are dense and durable, making them harder to carve but resulting in more detailed work. Softwoods, such as pine or basswood, are easier to carve and are often preferred by beginners. The choice between hardwood and softwood depends on your project requirements and skill level.

Detail Knife

A detail knife has a smaller, finer blade for intricate work. It's essential for adding fine details and finishing touches to your carving. Investing in a

good detail knife can significantly improve the precision and quality of your carvings, especially for intricate patterns and small features.

Strop

- A strop is a piece of leather used to polish and maintain the sharpness of your knife. Regular stropping keeps your blades in optimal condition, ensuring clean and effortless cuts. Keeping your knives sharp is crucial for safety and efficiency, as dull blades can slip and cause accidents.

Relief Carving

Relief carving is a technique where the design is carved into a flat piece of wood, creating a raised effect. This method is commonly used for creating detailed images or scenes. Start by outlining your design with stop cuts, then gradually remove the background wood to make the design stand out.

Round Carving

Also known as "in the round" carving, this technique involves creating fully three-dimensional sculptures. Unlike relief carving, round carving requires attention to all sides of the piece. This technique can be more challenging but allows for greater creativity and detail.

And, there you go! You're now smarter than those who don't know. The terminology helps. The whittling techniques get the job done.

Which is the moment you've been waiting for. Well, it's time...

Let's whittle your first piece of art - Start to Finish - here: [Whittling Project Part 1](#)

Whittling Project Part 1

Let's Draw

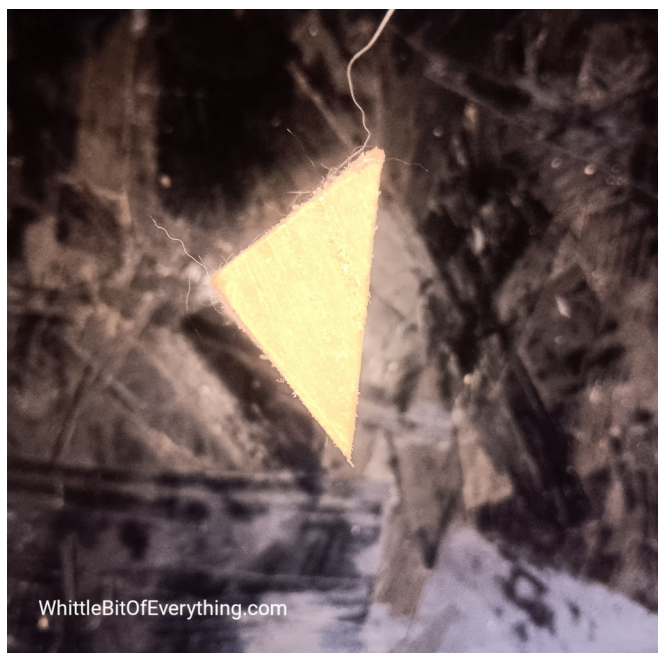


This is probably one of the easiest whittling projects you'll come across in your journey. It's easy to draw. It's an easy whittle.

There's pictures, so I won't do much talking here. You'll be using triangles to draw this one out.



First, you're going to need a piece of wood. I'll be using basswood. It was a 2 inch x 2 inch block cut into quarters. You should have something like the following.



Step 1. About an inch from the top, draw a line. It doesn't need to be accurate. I didn't have a tape measure at the time, so I just used my thumbnail for reference.



This line is a reference point for the bottom of your hat.



Step 2. Draw the hat and hat brim.



Step 3. Add movement to the hat, making it fold over.



Step 4: Add the hat band.



Step 5: Add the nose



Step 6: Add the eye area.



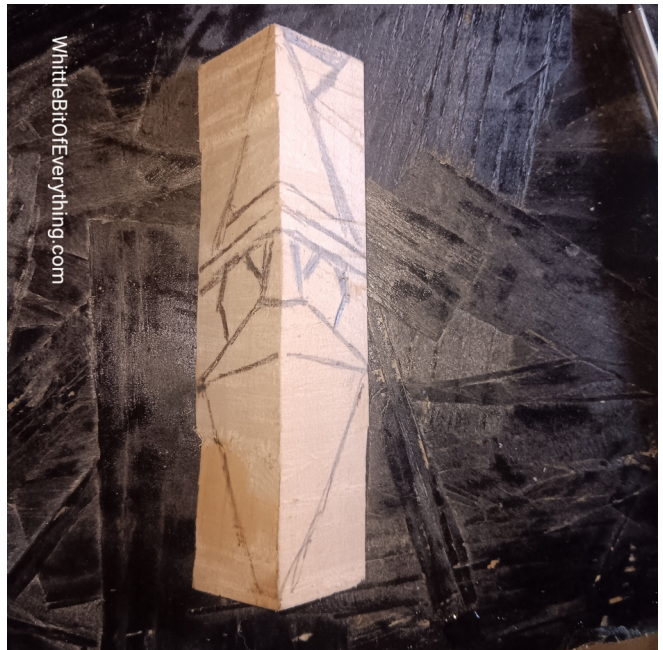
Step 7: Add the mustache.



Step 8: Separate the hair and face.



Step 9: Add the beard.



Step 10: Draw the mouth.



Step 11: Add movement to the beard.



That's it. You're now an artist. Feels great! Doesn't it? It gets better. We'll add some details once we start whittling. More triangles. First, we have to get some of that wood off. Let's jump to [Part 2](#).

Whittling Project: Part 2

Let's Whittle!



WhittleBitOfEverything.com

You're about whittle. Safety first. Make sure your work area's clear, you have good light and please... Don't cut yourself.

You can - will - make mistakes. That's how we learn. At least, that's what folks keep telling me. And, yes, I make a lot of mistakes.

Make your mistake and keep whittling.

One thing I've learned about art is, anything goes! I'm not saying this to be funny but, people like the strangest things.

Some will see a whittled bear missing an ear and purchase it for the same price as a masterpiece. My first whittles were blocky and crude. I couldn't whittle them fast enough. People would buy them.

Now, I spend hours, sometimes days, on a carving and it'll sit for several years before it sells. You just don't know.

I can say this, once you get started, whittling makes life better. You'll see. Sooner than later, you'll be sitting in your favorite whittling chair or spot. You'll be pulling out the tools and materials for your next project.

At some point, you'll notice all the whittling you've already done.

And, you're gonna grin!

I call it "fantasy land." You've got all these little gnomes, birds, animals and everything else that can be whittled, staring at you. If you've brought them to life with a little paint, or a diorama, it's really cool.

Suddenly, you get a jolt and you can't wait to get started. Instant motivation - no meditation needed. Best way to start a project ever!

This project is designed to get you there. After a few of these, you can try adding more details. Change it up a bit to make it a Santa. Add a pipe and you've got a hillbilly.

They can be useful too. Add a magnet to the back and stick them on the fridge. Glue it to a clothespin and you've got high-end jewelry.

Or, you can move onto a different project. There's plenty of options out there. So, let's get started.

Step 1. Add any additional details you can think of - before you make your first cut. Here you can see, I extended the hat.



I also added more triangles to add shape to the hair, mustache and beard.

This is optional. You can leave it smooth or go crazy with it.

Keep in mind, the more complex the details get, the more attention you have to pay to the drawing.

I was going to add this in with the drawings but, I forgot. So, here they are.

Here, you can see that I shaded the places that will be taken out first. You don't have to do this.

I did it to show what's you'll be roughing out.

You'll be using push, pull and stop cuts to get started.



Your first cut, a stop cut, will take out the section that gives your hat its motion.

If you're not adding motion, slice it off.



Now, slice up to your stop cut. You can cut right at the line. Be sure to hold the knife straight.

Also, use your non dominant thumb to guide the blade. I demonstrated it best I could with one hand.

What happens is, you try pushing the knife with your dominant hand vs. guiding the blade, there's a good chance you'll over-cut.

It's the little techniques like this that make it look like magic later on.



It should eventually look something like this. I'll cut a little more off to get rid of those lines. Then continue with the roughing.



All the big stuff is now gone. Now, we'll start cutting out our triangles.



Using stop cuts, cut a notch into each line for the hat band, brim, brow and nose. Then, slice accordingly:

Down for the hat area

Up for the brow and nose.



Here's the front view.



Do the same for the mustache and mouth.



Here's the opposite side.



Start shaping your hat. Slice, with the grain, removing what isn't the hat. Round off all the edges.



Set the point of your blade deep into the top line of the hat band.



Now, carefully, roll the knife back, cutting deep into the line, creating a stop cut.



Slice down to your stop cut. Then, repeat it on the other side.



Clean up your hat by removing what isn't needed.



Voila, you whittled a hat. Let's accessorize the hat. Do the same at the hat brim line.



You're whittling! Just keep it going. Do the same to the other side.



And follow up with the bottom of the hat brim.



Place a stop cut just below the hat brim. This is going to be the top of your eyes and eye brows.



Start about a third of the way up the nose and slice into the stop cut creating the brow area.



Here's the side view.



Slice, from the tip of the nose to the stop cut on an angle to start creating the nose.



Cutting deep with the tip of your blade, follow the lines for each side of the nose.



Then, leaving some nose, place a stop cut for the top of the eye area.



Slice from the bottom of the nose up to the stop cut. Be careful to not dig the tip of your blade into the nose.



It'll look like this.



Repeat on the other side.



Let's give that nose some more shape. We're going to chip out next to the nostrils to add some depth.

It should look something like this. You can start shallow, adjusting the depth as needed.



To make the cut, place your stop cut at the mustache/outside nostril area.



Now, plunge just the tip of your blade at the top of the mustache, following up the nose.



Then, slice down.

Cheeky lookin' fella, ain't he!

Just a bit more magic, and maybe we can get him to sing for us.

Note the hat brim. Yes, I clipped it.

Keep following along, you'll see the mistake disappear before your eyes.

But, here's the secret...

I just happened to have enough wood there to fix it.



Now that you know the secret, followup the last cut to shape mustache.

Place a stop cut on the mustache line and slice down.



And then, give him a nice prominent mustache.

Place your stop cuts at the bottom of the mustache and slice up.

Now, if you're grinning because that little whittle is starting to show potential, check this next step out...



Here, we separate the face from the hair. You'll be "chip carving" here.

Chip out top and bottom of the hair line. You're only using the tip of your blade to make a small triangle, similar to the eye area, only it's much smaller.

Then, chip out the line that's left. Repeat for the other side.



Looking Good!



Chip out the 2 nostrils at the bottom of the nose.



Shape the nose.



Place a deep cut for mouth.



Cut in the lips.



Smile!

And, start shaping the beard.



And, keep shaping.

Round things off. Deepen any cuts that might need it. Clean it up.



So close...

Let's give the beard some details.

We need more triangles.



Get rid of what isn't the beard.



Add some lines. I end my lines at the top of each triangle. This make it easier to slice.



So, slice out those lines.

Don't forget to stop cut the lines at the mustache.



If you haven't done so already, finish shaping the mustache.



Add a small notch near the center.



And then, follow thru, not quite up to the nose.



Add the triangles.



Cut the triangles out and add your lines.



Slice off.

Then move up to the hair.



More triangles. You got this!



Good thing I'd left a bit extra wood there. I'll reshape the hat and hair a little, to make it work.

This is one of the reasons I continue past my mistakes.

Sometimes I can't see past my mistakes. Pushing on, most times it'll fix itself. Most!

Sometimes, I can just fix the problem myself.

When I can't, I set it out anyway.



People love "unique" items.

Problem fixed, let's add more triangles. This time, it's the hair, just below the hat brim.



Chip away and, let's start bringing your little whittle to life.



A simple V cut for the eyes will do it.
And then...



Just a quick V cut to the cheeks.

You can clean it off with a little dish soap and water on a toothbrush. Gently scrub it, then give it a rinse.

When it dries, you'll see any chatter in the wood that needs to be cleaned up with the blade.

But, you're done.



Your very own piece of art.

Enjoy the feeling!

Not only did you learn something really super-duper cool, you also learned something you can pass along.

And that, my friend, is when the magic REALLY begins!



It only takes a few minutes to do a show and tell when it comes to whittling. I usually have a knife, blocks of wood and a pencil with me in the van. Whenever I'm waiting on someone or something, I'll whittle - outside the van (whittling does get messy.)

It's not long after I get started that someone will come up and start asking questions.

It's easier for me to show than explain, so they walk away knowing the basics anyway.

When twigs are available, and they usually are here in Tennessee, I just show them how to whittle a rooster, start to finish. These roosters are how I learned whittling.

They're quick, easy and fun to whittle around campfires.

I must warn you, these little whittles start adding up fast. I highly recommend you find a good storage/display area for them now.



You may even find yourself unexpectedly in business, like I did. However, before you start thinking up business names, let's talk about finishing your art work.

Finishing Your Whittling

Add Color, Seal it or light it on fire – Easy Decision

At this point, you have two options;

Option 1: you're done.

Option 2: You add color.



I don't paint my whittling much, anymore. Because I use whittling as a base for my chainsaw carving, I try getting the details to stand out enough that I don't need to paint.

I do have to paint some things though. When I do, it's water based.

Water based acrylic paints are enough. You can use oil based if you don't mind cleaning up with chemicals. I've found that both need to be thinned down when using.

I also prefer the cheap brushes. Occasionally, I'll use a professional brush on details. Typically, the cheap brushes work fine.

Learning to control the brush is what counts. Keep your painting hand supported whenever possible.

If holding the whittle in your hand, which is usually the situation, use your fingers to support the other hand when brushing.

Antiquing is sometimes used to finish off a piece. This will add more depth by making the deeper cuts darker.

You may find yourself trying an airbrush at some point. If you can master these things, you can do some really amazing shadowing. They can have their problems such as clogging, but overall, airbrushing can be very useful.

You can also add a clear finish if you'd like.

Beeswax, or other wood finishing products will work. Any one of them will change the color of the wood, but not much.

Torching, something I do a lot of when carving with chainsaws, can be another option. A small butane torch is usually sufficient. Speaking from experience, the butane gets hot - DO NOT hold the carving when burning.

Some folk will even sand their whittling. I can honestly say, "I have no experience in sanding after whittling." I shall try it some day.

For now, let's talk business.

Yes, whittling is one of those things that can earn you an income. You can make a living at it, if you're willing to put in the effort. For me, it was more of an accident. I was supposed to be filling out job applications.

Once I started whittling, it just grew - really fast.

At first, it was those twig roosters. I had hundreds of them, and more were being whittled. Of course I was giving them away. Still do.

Since I didn't have a job at the time, I figured I'd better make some money to support this whittling thing. So, I just kept learning.

To do so, I would sit in front of a little antiques store in town. Here, I'd whittle for several hours. People started buying immediately.

It worked.

The carvings got bigger. The tools got more expensive. The hobby - turned business - grew.

My first commissioned piece was actually done a barter for whittling books and a knew knife. I'll still use bartering today. It's usually equipment now, but I still learn something new every time I get a new book or video on carving.

An education costs money.

Which is another reason your little whittling hobby goes big time. You just don't know.

Fortunately, you have the business information you'll need if it does happen. Let's check it out here: [Whittling Business](#)

Whittling Business

You're either going into business or you're not. If it happens, this is what you'll need to know to stay out of trouble and be successful.



Starting any business venture will be frustrating, especially if you don't know where to start. Since I've had the opportunity to start and run a few businesses (some successful even) I can say this, starting a business is very straightforward.

But a whittling business can be started with minimal investment. We'll cover that, a business plan, what will kill your business and more.

As I said, whittling doesn't cost much. A whittling business only costs a bit more than the beginner's tools. Here's a list of essentials you'll need:

Tools and Materials

Knives: Basic set of high-quality whittling knives.

Wood: Blocks of softwood like basswood or pine, which are beginner-friendly and inexpensive.

Sharpening Supplies: Strops and honing compound for maintaining a sharp edge.

Workspace

Designated Workspace: A small, well-lit area with a sturdy table and comfortable chair. Keep in mind, safety measures like proper ventilation and disposal for wood shavings.

You'll also want a portable workspace for shows.

Safety Gear

Protective Gear: Cut-resistant gloves and thumb guards to prevent injuries.

Learning and Skill Development

Instructional Materials: Books, online courses, or tutorials to refine your skills and learn advanced techniques.

You can also join whittling communities or forums for tips and advice.

Business Essentials

Business Plan: A simple business plan outlining your goals, target market, and pricing strategy.

Marketing Materials: Business cards, flyers, and an online presence (social media profiles, a basic website, or an Etsy shop).

Packaging Supplies: Packaging materials for shipping products if you plan to sell online.

Licenses and Permits: Check local regulations for any required business licenses or permits.

What's it all cost?

Initial Investment Estimate

- Tools and Materials: \$100 - \$200
- Workspace Setup: \$50 - \$100
- Safety Gear: \$20 - \$50
- Learning Resources: Free to \$50
- Marketing and Business Essentials: \$50 - \$100

Total Initial Investment: \$220 - \$500.

So you see, a whittling business isn't too far out of reach. I did it because I didn't want to get a job. I had been enjoying life at the time. It started as a long vacation and just kept going.

Had I not discovered whittling, I'm not really sure what I'd be doing. Anyways, it does help to have a plan in place. Let me show you what a basic business plan looks like.

The Basic Business Plan For Whittlers

We're going to outline your goals, target market, and strategies for success. You'll have an idea of who to sell to, what to sell and where to sell it. It's just a template but, feel free to copy it.

Here we go...

Whittling Business Plan Template

Executive Summary

Business Name: [Your Business Name]

Business Type: Whittling/Crafts

Mission Statement: To create high-quality, handcrafted whittled products that bring joy and functionality to everyday life.

Business Overview

Products and Services:

- Whittled figurines
- Kitchen utensils (spoons, forks, spatulas)
- Custom whittled items (personalized gifts, sculptures)
- Whittling classes or workshops

Target Market:

- Craft enthusiasts
- Gift shoppers
- Home decor market
- Hobbyists and DIYers

Market Analysis

Industry Overview:

- Growing interest in handmade and artisanal products
- Increasing popularity of DIY hobbies and crafts

Competitor Analysis:

- Identify local and online competitors
- Analyze their pricing, product range, and marketing strategies

Unique Selling Proposition (USP):

- High-quality, handcrafted items
- Customization options
- Use of sustainable materials

Marketing Plan

Marketing Strategy:

- Build an online presence through a website and social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, Etsy)
- Participate in local craft fairs and markets
- Offer promotions and discounts to first-time customers
- Collaborate with influencers or bloggers in the crafts niche

Sales Strategy:

- Direct sales through an online store (Etsy, personal website)
- Wholesale to local gift shops and boutiques
- Custom orders for special occasions and events

Operations Plan

Location:

- Home-based workshop or small rented space

Suppliers:

- Local wood suppliers or sustainable wood sources
- Tool and material suppliers (knives, sharpening tools, finishing supplies)

Production Process:

- Design and sketching
- Whittling and carving
- Sanding and finishing
- Quality control

Financial Plan

Startup Costs:

- Tools and materials: \$200
- Workspace setup: \$100
- Safety gear: \$50
- Marketing and business essentials: \$100

Revenue Streams:

- Product sales (online and offline)
- Custom orders
- Workshops and classes

Pricing Strategy:

- Competitive pricing based on market research
- Consider cost of materials, time, and craftsmanship

Financial Projections:

- Estimate monthly sales and expenses
- Project break-even point and profitability timeline

Management and Organization

Owner/Manager: [Your Name]

- Role and responsibilities: overseeing production, marketing, sales, and customer service

Staff: (if applicable)

- Potential for part-time help or collaboration with other artisans as business grows

Goals and Milestones

Short-Term Goals:

- Set up an online store and social media profiles
- Make first sales within the first 3 months
- Participate in at least one local craft fair

Long-Term Goals:

- Establish a strong brand presence
- Expand product range and introduce new designs
- Grow customer base and achieve steady monthly revenue

Appendix

Additional Information:

- Any relevant certificates or training
- Detailed product descriptions and pricing
- Marketing materials (sample flyers, business cards)

Like I said, it's basic. I never went to a business school. I learned about most of this stuff through ordering business courses off the internet. Then, it was trial and error.

At least with a basic plan, you can find the errors sooner than later.

Plan in place, you're going to need to fill out some paperwork and, of course, give the government their due. It's not much. But I'm still going to complain about it.

So, here's the gist of it...

When starting a business, any business, it's essential to ensure you comply with local regulations by obtaining the necessary licenses and permits.

Here's The Steps to Ensure Compliance:

1. Research Local Requirements: Visit your city, county, and state government websites to understand specific requirements.
2. Consult with Professionals: Consider speaking with a business advisor or attorney to ensure all legal aspects are covered.
3. Keep Records: Maintain copies of all licenses and permits, and track renewal dates to stay compliant.

Here's a general overview of what you might need:

Business License

- Purpose: Allows you to legally operate your business within your municipality.
- Where to Obtain: Local city or county clerk's office.
- Cost: Varies by location, typically between \$50 and \$100 annually.

Seller's Permit (Sales Tax Permit)

- Purpose: Required if you sell tangible goods to collect sales tax from customers.
- Where to Obtain: State's Department of Revenue or similar agency.
- Cost: Usually free, but you must collect and remit sales tax.

Home Occupation Permit

- Purpose: Needed if you run your business from home to ensure compliance with local zoning laws.
- Where to Obtain: Local city or county planning or zoning department.
- Cost: Varies, often between \$0 and \$50.

Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN)

- Purpose: Required if you plan to hire employees, and may be needed for opening a business bank account.
- Where to Obtain: Internal Revenue Service (IRS).
- Cost: Free.

Business Name Registration (DBA - Doing Business As)

- Purpose: If you operate under a business name different from your legal name.
- Where to Obtain: Local county clerk's office or state government office.

- Cost: Typically between \$10 and \$100, depending on location.

Cottage Food Permit (if applicable)

- Purpose: If you plan to sell food items (e.g., wooden utensils designed for food use), you may need to comply with cottage food laws.
- Where to Obtain: Local health department.
- Cost: Varies widely by state and type of food product.

Special Permits for Selling at Markets and Fairs

- Purpose: Required for participating in local craft fairs, farmers' markets, or other temporary events.
- Where to Obtain: Event organizers or local government offices.
- Cost: Varies by event.

By securing the appropriate licenses and permits, you should be able to operate your business legally and avoid potential fines or legal issues.

Here's What's Going To Kill Your Business

Being the boss has its rewards. Starting new has its challenges. So, let's look at a few ways to avoid potential problems. These pretty much hold true in any business.

Problems & Remedies

Problem: Inconsistent Quality - Producing inconsistent or subpar quality products can damage your reputation and lead to dissatisfied customers.

Remedies:

- Invest in high-quality tools and materials.
- Continuously hone your skills through practice and learning.
- Implement a quality control process to ensure each product meets your standards.

Problem: Poor Time Management - Balancing art and the business end can be challenging, leading to missed deadlines or burnout.

Remedies:

- Create a realistic schedule that includes time for production, marketing, and administrative tasks.
- Set specific goals and deadlines.
- Use productivity tools and apps to manage tasks and time efficiently.

Problem: Underpricing Products - Setting prices too low can result in inadequate profits and undervalue your work.

Remedies:

- Research market prices for similar products.
- Calculate all costs, including materials, labor, and overhead, to ensure pricing covers expenses and provides a profit margin.
- Don't be afraid to adjust prices as needed to reflect the value of your work.

Problem: Limited Market Reach - Relying solely on local sales can limit growth potential.

Remedies:

- Expand your reach through online platforms like Etsy, eBay, or your own website.
- Utilize social media to connect with a broader audience.
- Participate in craft fairs, markets, and trade shows to gain exposure.

Problem: Inadequate Marketing - Without effective marketing, attracting customers can be difficult.

Remedies:

- Develop a marketing plan that includes online and offline strategies.
- Use social media, email newsletters, and SEO to increase online visibility.
- Network with other artisans and local businesses to build relationships and gain referrals.

Problem: Overextending Financially - Overspending on materials, tools, or marketing will strain your finances.

Remedies:

- Start with a modest budget and scale up gradually.
- Track all expenses and adjust spending based on cash flow.

- Prioritize essential investments and avoid unnecessary expenditures.

Problem: Lack of Business Knowledge - Focusing solely on the craft without understanding the business aspects can lead to operational issues.

Remedies:

- Educate yourself on basic business principles, including accounting, marketing, and customer service.
- Consider taking small business courses or workshops.
- Seek advice from mentors or join small business groups and forums.

Problem: Ignoring Customer Feedback - Failing to listen to customer feedback can result in lost sales and missed opportunities for improvement.

Remedies:

- Encourage and welcome feedback from customers.
- Use feedback to make improvements and address any issues.
- Show appreciation for your customers and build strong relationships.

Problem: Inadequate Online Presence - A weak or nonexistent online presence can limit your business's visibility and growth.

Remedies:

- Develop a professional website showcasing your products.
- Optimize your online profiles and product listings with high-quality photos and detailed descriptions.
- Stay active on social media and engage with your audience regularly.

Problem: Not Diversifying Products - Offering a limited range of products can restrict your market appeal.

Remedies:

- Experiment with different types of products to see what resonates with your audience.
- Offer customization options or limited-edition items.
- Stay informed about market trends and customer preferences to adapt your product line.

Look to set up your whittling business up for success and sustainable growth in the beginning. Because I went from whittling to wood carving to chainsaw carving in a short amount of time, I had boxes of different wood species that weren't getting used.

It wasn't until I found something that resembled balance in Whittle Bit of Everything that I was able to use it up. Today, I purchase things on an "as-needed" basis. I do keep some special pieces set aside for personal use.

And, at some point in this venture, I purchased a saw mill. That's a whole other book. But, it brings me to the profits of whittling.

If you haven't realized it yet, you'll have to have some hustle in you to do this business thing. That said, with time put in, you can turn your little (and, probably getting overcrowded) whittling hobby into a thriving business.

Or, as I like to call it, a lifestyle!

Sometimes it's a job. Most of the time, I get to carve. I really can't complain too much.

So let's look at a general idea of what you can expect to earn as an ambitious new whittler.

NOTE: These Are POTENTIAL Earnings!

The outcome of your new whittling business can vary widely. This will be based on several factors, including the quality and uniqueness of the carvings, the target market, marketing strategies, and business scale.

However, these numbers are kept to the low side. If you've got the energy, use it. A little extra money never hurts. Here's something to shoot for.

Initial Phase (0-6 Months)

- Sales Volume: Initially, sales may be modest as you build your brand and customer base.
- Revenue: Expect anywhere from \$100 to \$500 per month. This can be higher if you participate in craft fairs or have successful online sales.

- Expenses: Marketing, materials, tools, and permits can eat into early profits.

Growth Phase (6-18 Months)

- Sales Volume: As you gain experience, build a portfolio, and develop a customer base, sales should increase.
- Revenue: Could range from \$500 to \$1,500 per month, depending on marketing efforts and customer retention.
- Expenses: Continued investment in materials, possibly upgrading tools, and more robust marketing strategies.

Established Phase (18+ Months)

- Sales Volume: With a well-established brand, consistent quality, and a loyal customer base, sales should be more predictable and substantial.
- Revenue: \$1,500 to \$5,000+ per month, depending on the scale of operations, custom orders, and wholesale deals.
- Expenses: Higher volume of materials, possible hiring of part-time help, and more extensive marketing and operational costs.

Like I said, these numbers might not make you want to quit your day job, but let's look at what's determining these factors and how to give these numbers a boost.

Since it doesn't take much, it's worth knowing.

How To Give Your Sales A Boost

1. Understand Product Range and Pricing:

- Higher-priced custom pieces or large items can significantly boost revenue.
- Offering a variety of products (figurines, utensils, custom work) can attract different customer segments.

2. Utilize Marketing and Sales Channels:

- Effective use of online platforms (Etsy, personal website, social media) can drive sales.
- Participating in local markets and fairs can provide additional income and brand exposure.

3. Grow A LOYAL Customer Base:

- Building a loyal customer base can lead to repeat sales and word-of-mouth referrals.
- Providing excellent customer service and high-quality products can enhance customer loyalty.

4. Continuously Update Your Operational Efficiency:

- Streamlining production processes can reduce costs and increase profit margins.
- Investing in better tools and workspace setup can improve productivity.

Potential Annual Earnings With A Few Tweaks

- First Year: \$2,000 to \$10,000, considering initial setup and slow build-up.
- Second Year: \$6,000 to \$20,000, with growth in customer base and brand recognition.
- Third Year and Beyond: \$12,000 to \$60,000+, depending on business expansion, product offerings, and market demand.

I was very fortunate to have some business background before all this. And, while the thought was there, I really didn't plan anything at first. I just wanted to learn whittling and didn't have a job at the time.

It only took a few sales to see the potential. And, once things got rolling, I became known as an artist. This, eventually, generated more income. More money, more problems.

The cost of replacing tools can get out of hand – All in one day!

Whittle Bit of Everything nearly went out of business. I don't know if the gas was bad, or maybe I mixed it wrong, but I had 3 chainsaws die in the same day. Unfortunately, I'd just replaced a bunch of other tools around that time. We were broke.

Fortunately, we'd started getting the rest of the business together. It was a very uncomfortable few months. And yes, we still have these times on occasion. They're just not so miserable.

I had figured out where the money was coming from and learned how to keep it coming in.

Strategies to Increase Earnings

#1 Specialize In One Product: Your sales will tell you what sells best. Put it out there. These are the pieces that should dominate your business. For instance, bears sell. I carve a lot of bears. I change up the accessories like fishing poles or a hat, but bears keep me in business.

#2 Expand Product Line: Along side your #1 product, introduce new and unique products to attract more customers. While everyone might like the bears, they just don't want one. Find out what they're looking for and put a few out there.

Meanwhile, you continue your whittling education and put a few of those pieces out there. Document everything. Take pictures of everything.

#3 Increase Online Presence: Post the information to your social media, your professional website, and online marketplaces to reach a broader audience. Get your art out there while teaching others.

#4 Offer Workshops and Classes: Teach others what you've learned. You'll learn more about the basics from teaching than any course out there. As your knowledge grows, you can offer more advanced classes.

#5 Challenge Yourself With Custom Pieces: Whittling custom pieces for special occasions can command higher prices. I once glued several blocks together to create a bear holding toilet paper.

This was before chainsaw.

I used a handsaw to shape the big block into a bear with its arms out. Then I used a Flexcut Cutting Knife to finish it off. I'd jumped from \$20 whittles to \$200 whittles just because I wanted to try something new.

#6 Take On Commissioned Orders: You can turn them down, but most commissioned pieces will pay very well. The problem you might run into is how much to charge. First starting out, I suggest you set an hourly rate you can live with and stick to it. Then, increase your rate as your business and skills grow.

Also, it's likely that you're going to meet other artists during your journey, embrace them!

#7 Collaborate with Other Artisans: It's not difficult to partner with other craftspeople to create unique art or product bundles. There really are times when 2 heads are better.

Just remember, if you focus on quality, customer satisfaction, and effective marketing, your little whittling business can grow steadily and potentially become a lifestyle for you.

I've enjoyed the challenge. Had it not been for my desire to learn whittling... Okay, it's an addiction!... But, I still don't know how I'd have handled being an employee.

Be safe!

Enjoy the journey.

Keep whittling!

Fred Acker
Whittle Bit of Everything
whittlebitofeverything.com