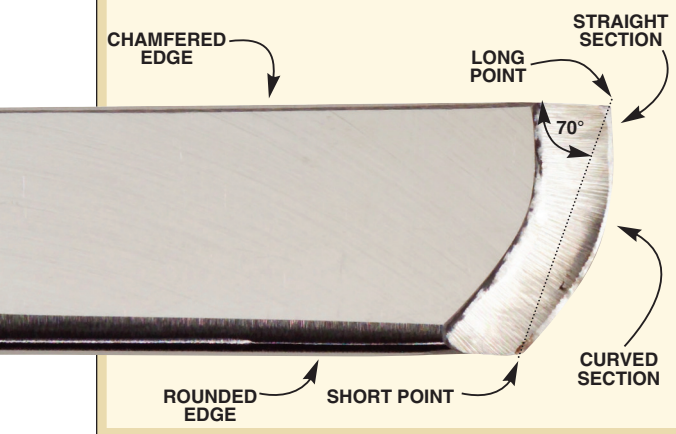


The Modified Profile

My skew's profile has two sections: straight and curved. The straight section begins at the skew's long point and extends one-fourth to one-third of the blade's width. The curved section continues to the skew's short point. The angle from long point to short point is about 70 degrees, the same as on a conventional skew.

I also modify my skew's body. I round over the short point side and lightly chamfer both edges of the long point side.

Shape the Sides

Begin modifying a conventional skew by reshaping its sides (Photo 1). I prefer to do this on a belt sander mounted in a stand and equipped with a belt designed to cut metal (see Sources, page 44). Be sure to remove all the dust from the sander and set aside its bag to avoid starting a fire. Start with a 60-grit belt; finish with a 120-grit belt. I round the short point side to glide with a smooth motion when planing and to easily rotate and pivot the tool when rolling beads.

Grind the tool's profile on a 36- or 46-grit wheel (see "The Modified Profile," above, and Photo 2). I use a coarse wheel because this step removes a lot of material.

Sharpen the Edge

Switch to a 60- or 80-grit wheel. Adjust the tool rest to grind the same angle as on a conventional skew. I prefer to set this angle by measuring distances. The length of the bevel should be approximately 1-1/2 times the tool's thickness. The angle between both bevels will then be 35 to 40 degrees. As you grind, you'll probably have to tweak the tool rest's angle to get it right.

Two Tools in One

With both straight and curved sections, a modified skew is quite versatile.

The curved area is great for these tasks:

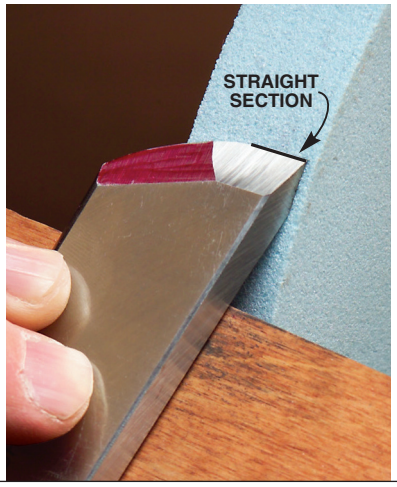
- Planing and rolling cuts. If you lead with the short point side and cut with the tool's curved section, you cannot dig in. Digging in is a real problem with a conventional skew and a bane to all novice turners.
- Planing chip-prone woods, such as red oak or figured maple.
- Forming the concave and convex sections of a spindle.

The straight section is great for these tasks:

- Peeling away wood, like a large parting tool.
- Slicing rounded pommels (with the long point down).
- Scraping end grain and knots.
- Working in tight areas. The curve creates a small clearance.

1 Begin modifying a standard skew on a belt sander. Hold the tool so the belt always travels away from you. Completely round the short point side up to the ferrule; chamfer the sharp edges of the long point side.

2 Grind the straight and curved profiles. Position the tool rest about 90 degrees to the wheel. I've mounted a wood platform on my tool rest to have a broader area of support, which is critical for modifying and resharpening a skew.



3 Begin grinding the profile's straight section. Color the old bevel with a felt-tip marker to identify where the wheel cuts.