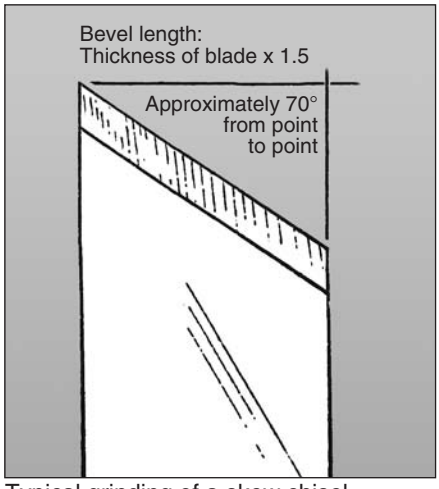
Go slow, be deliberate, leave the tool on the wheel, and use only enough pressure as it takes to keep the tool from bouncing on the rest. I am always surprised how much of grinding and turning is really about feeling your way along rather than seeing.

In grinding, most of the action is on the other side of what you can see. We can help the looking part along—especially when learning the process—by placing our head to the side of the grinder or by the use of a mirror (attributed to a North Carolina turner). In time, most of your grinding will be by feel and watching the spark trail to give the additional feedback.

Until you have a sense of where you are grinding on the tool, it's helpful to either place your head to the side of the wheel or make use of a small mirror. The mirror, shown above, allows you to see your placement of the tool on the wheel.

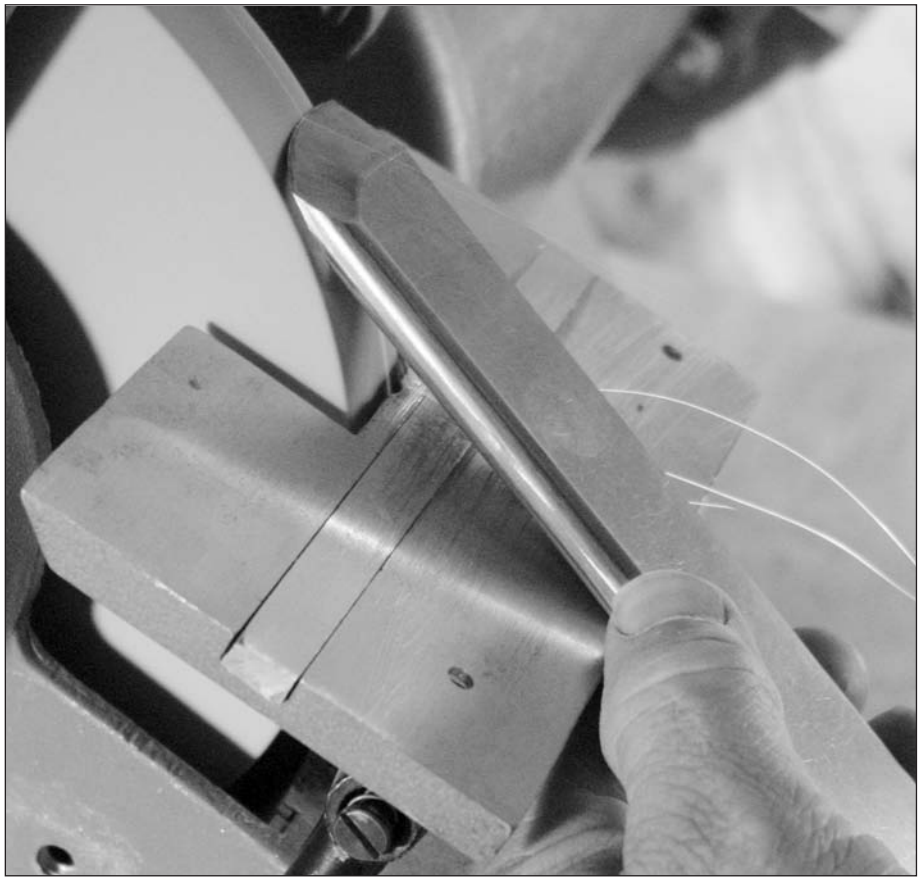


Typical grinding of a skew chisel

3. Skew chisels

Fortunately, the sharpening of a skew chisel is similar to the parting tool: two ground flat planes that meet to form a cutting edge. The only real difference is in the skewed angle of the cutting end—essentially a clearing and viewing advantage over a square-across chisel.

Again, profile the tool first. For a "traditional" straight-edged skew, I recommend 70 degrees from point to point. Rather than measuring included angles to measure the steepness of the two ground bevels, I use the thickness of the steel as the reference. Using this method, grind the bevels back to approximately 1.5 times the thickness of the blade.



Using the back edge of the tool rest, pivot the curved skew to grind the edge. Using a rotational movement, grind in the area that is roughly parallel to the face of the wheel.

If you can see the edge, there is no edge.