

Some Tips on Turning Hollow Forms

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If you're just starting out turning hollow forms, I suggest that you use your hollowing tool to hollow an open, or nearly open, bowl. This will allow you to familiarize yourself with the cutting action of the tool by actually watching it perform as you turn. You won't be able to do that when cutting inside a vessel.

When rough turning the outside of a vessel, leave thicker wood in the bottom portion. This will give more solid turning when hollowing the vessel. Finish shaping the outside bottom area after hollowing.

Start hollowing by boring a hole down the center to just short of the final depth. This will aid in hollowing and also serves as a guide for how deep to hollow. I use a hand-held 3/8-inch drill, but a drill, using the tailstock and a Jacobs chuck, works well.

I suggest rough turning the inside of a vessel even if the wood is dry. Then, after completing the outside, go back and finish the hollowing.

Do the final hollowing a couple of inches at a time, working your way down, so that you're always cutting against thicker wood. This will provide more stable cutting.

Set the tool rest height so that the cutter on your hollowing tool is cutting on the centerline of the vessel, or perhaps a little above. Cutting below center invites a catch.

Use your hollowing tool with the cutter tipped down slightly. This will give a sort of shearing cut. This is especially true when using a rounded scraper on your tool.

Never allow the tool to touch the rim when hollowing. This is a sure way to break a vessel if a catch occurs.

Measure the wall thickness frequently. That's especially true when you're deep inside the vessel. Calipers, such as double-ended calipers, are a must.

For deeper pieces, a steady-rest is really a necessity. One can be shop-built, using plywood and inline skate wheels.