

## Napkin Rings

Napkin rings are nice introduction to face grain turning. We have used this project with our more advanced students at Maryland hall. We have also used it in weeklong classes with older students. The older students can turn their own mandrels. . This is one project where kids will often come in the next class wanting to make a set of napkin rings. The youngest students we've done this project with were 12.

We had one student who told us he wanted to turn a set of napkin rings next week. He further explained that it took him 40 minutes to do the first one 30 minutes to do the second one and 15 minutes to do the third one and that next week he was going to make 8. I told him not to set out to make 8 but rather make one he was happy with and then make another. If he tried to make 8 he would, but he might not be pleased with any of them. If he concentrated on doing his best on them one at a time he might make fewer but he would be happy with them and most likely he would make more. (he made 9 nice ones)



Some student napkin rings wet with walnut oil. A gavel, ring, and spindle are other items done by students. The tall spindle with the slot is part of a string puzzle along with the small wooden ring.

**Blank:**

2"x2"x1.5" hardwood such as maple, cherry, walnut, locust, with a 1.5" hole.  
The grain can run either way. Most often we drill the hole through the face grain.  
With younger students I round the square corners on their first two blanks.



Blanks, mandrels, keeper



Mandrel on a 3/4x16 nut and keeper

**Tools:**

- Face Shield
- Disposable dust mask
- Parting tool
- 1/4 or 3/8 spindle gouge
- Wooden mandrel (see below)
- Sandpaper and walnut oil

**Design considerations:** Students can really experiment with design. The only critical element is that the smallest outside diameter at least a 1/4" diameter larger than the hole through the middle. This may be the student's first introduction to multiples. These are multiples where a set can all have unique forms. Both symmetrical and asymmetrical forms work well. Every once in a while a student will cut through one.

**Class format:**

We begin each class with a review of the safety rules. I do a review of the spindle gouge. Then since this is an advanced project I demonstrate the turning of an entire napkin ring start to sanding and the students can take it from there.

## Turning:

1. Mount the blank on the mandrel.
2. Using a high lathe speed round to a cylinder. I have students rough blanks drilled through the face grain by making light cuts from either face toward the center using a spindle gouge. A small bowl gouge could be used.



Blank on Morse taper Mandrel



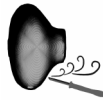
Roughing the face grain blank

3. Finish turn the edge facing the head stock and reverse the blank and finish the other face. I usually have the students do this with the gouge. If they are having trouble I have them use the parting tool to get a clean face.
4. Turn any design.
5. Sand to 220/320.
6. Remove from the mandrel and sand the hole.
7. Finish with walnut oil. Wet the napkin rings, let them sit for a few minutes and wipe off the excess.



Note: the wooden mandrels do take some abuse better than a chuck

Mandrels: We don't use 4 jaw chucks in any of our youth classes. The expense aside, we don't like having young folks turning close to metal. The class lathes dictate the mandrel design. On lathes with a 3/4x16 thread I epoxy a nut into the end of a 2x2x4 and turn the mandrel. For the 1x8 thread minis I use a 2x2x8 and turn a Morse taper on one end. The mandrel portion is made with a taper about 3" long 1 9/16" diameter tapering to 1 7/16". Added to this is a little piece I call a keeper. It is made from a 2"x2"x2" block with a 1 1/2" diameter hole 1" deep placed over the mandrel and turned round with a taper toward the hole to allow clearance for turning the napkin ring. The blank is placed over the mandrel, the keeper over the end of the mandrel and the tailstock brought up against the keeper and tightened a bit. We have had very few students who possessed both the hand strength to lock the blank onto the taper and the tool control to complete the napkin ring without the keeper.



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