Scrubbing or alternating single direction strokes?

Posted by RoccoSanello - 24 Jan 2013 23:12

Looking for a little clarification. In Clay's introductory video, he goes from the 100 through the 1000 grit paddles (I think) with alternating single direction strokes. While checking out a few random wicked edge YouTube videos, I noticed a lot of "scrubbing". It seems pretty easy to create a burr with the scrubbing motion. Is there a reason to use one method over the other? Should I do alternating strokes with everything except the ceramics? Should I use scrubbing through the first few grits to get a burr on the other side then switch to alternating single direction strokes towards the finer grits? You guys never let me down. Thanks.

- Rocco

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Re: Scrubbing or alternating single direction strokes?

Posted by mark76 - 25 Jan 2013 04:16

It doesn't really matter IMHO. When scrubbing you generally use a bit more power, so it may be more appropriate for the first grit, when you are trying to raise a bevel. An advantage of the sweeping motion is that you generally cover the whole edge in one go, so you don't run the risk of doing one part of the edge more than other parts. (Although you do need to be careful: when using a sweeping motion it is easy to "forget" the tip.) Also, when you alternate your sweeps, so generally don't raise a burr on one side anymore.

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Re: Scrubbing or alternating single direction strokes?

Posted by cbwx34 - 25 Jan 2013 07:27

RoccoSanello wrote:

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- Rocco

I usually use a scrubbing motion if I detect a problem area on a knife, otherwise I just use the alternating strokes. If you use a scrubbing motion to raise a burr, you only need to do it once (per side), not "through the first few grits". I'm curious why you think you do alternating strokes with "everything except the ceramics"? Not sure what that means.

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Re: Scrubbing or alternating single direction strokes?
Posted by RoccoSanello - 25 Jan 2013 19:24

Hey Curtis (I think that's your name cbwx),

The only reason I brought up "except ceramics" was purely out of not knowing. I was just bringing up different scenarios. Is there a minimum or maximum number of alternating strokes per side I should keep in mind? I realize it probably depends on the function of the knife and type of steel, but is there a loose rule of thumb I should stick to? Or should I instead just base it on what I see through the lupe?

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Re: Scrubbing or alternating single direction strokes?
Posted by razoredgeknives - 25 Jan 2013 19:38

In my opinion it doesn't matter which you do as long as you get rid of all the prior scratches. The "scrubbing" just seems to do this faster. I normally just scrub for a short period on each grit and then finish that grit with alternating sweeping passes, finishing with a light touch. The problem with scrubbing only is that you will wear away different parts of your edges of at different rates. The problem with sweeping is that the angle does change slightly near the tip due to the play in between the paddles and the rod. So just check it often under magnification 🙂
Hope this helps!

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Re: Scrubbing or alternating single direction strokes?
Posted by blacksheep25 - 26 Jan 2013 00:12

If I'm trying to evenly remove material, I'll make scratches in one direction, then come back and cross hatch it. When I'm re-profiling I use the scrubbing back and fourth (and sometimes side to side). On the final finish, I'll usually cut in the same direction you'd strop (away from the edge).

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Re: Scrubbing or alternating single direction strokes?
Posted by mark76 - 26 Jan 2013 02:54

RoccoSanello wrote:

Is there a minimum or maximum number of alternating strokes per side I should keep in mind? I realize it probably depends on the function of the knife and type of steel, but is there a loose rule of thumb I should stick to? Or should I instead just base it on what I see through the lupe?

Any experienced sharpener will tell you "it depends", "listen to the stones", "it's Zen", etc. However, when I just started sharpening I didn't know what stones sounded like, how to check whether scratches had been wiped out, ... Then Leo told me: first raise a burr on both sides of the edge (with the 100 grit stones), with subsequent stones do 50 strokes per side. That was very helpful.

That said, if you have a loupe, it can aid in making your learning curve flatter. Examine the edge after every stone and you'll quickly get an idea of whether you are there already or not yet.

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Re: Scrubbing or alternating single direction strokes?

Posted by PhilipPasteur - 26 Jan 2013 18:51

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As Mark said, 50 is a good rule of thumb... at least for grits to 600. I go more with the finer grits for scratch removal. If I got all of the way to my 12K stones, for the last few (5K, 10K, 12K) I may do 125. 100 edge trailing, and 25 or so edge leading.

As Mark also says, "it depends", on where I am trying to get to. Perfection takes more strokes...

I guess my ZEN is dead. I can tell differences in feel and sound, only up to a point. If I aim for max scratch removal and a mirror bevel, I use numbers and magnification. I simply can't tell the difference in sound and feel between very sharp and quite reflective and virtually scratch (visibly) free and a mirror bevel. Interestingly, lots of the Zen guys, still use magnification to check how well the "force" has done at the edge.

All of that said, you will get a nice sharp blade if you do 50 strokes per side at all grits...and save lots of time..

Scrubbing, well I typically only use that for agressive material removal. After a burr on both sides...**once per side**

, I will only use brisk up and down strokes for a while alternating sides, for scratch removal,when changing grits, then move to sweeping strokes alternating sides. After 1000 grit, I just use sweeping strokes. I do the same with the ceramics, BTW.

Too much scrubbing and you will violate the laws of conservation of steel.. !!

Phil

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Re: Scrubbing or alternating single direction strokes?

Posted by Geocyclist - 26 Jan 2013 22:46

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I agree with what everyone above has said. I always try to use "light" pressure with my stones. I can "feel" when one grit is done. At this point I put even more focus for 10-20 stroke to go even lighter, almost no pressure at all then, go to the next grit.

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Re: Scrubbing or alternating single direction strokes?

Posted by mark76 - 27 Jan 2013 03:51

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Phil,

I guess we agree on a lot of things. I am a scientist by education and (former) profession, so I really like to know what exactly is going on and I use a loupe and a microscope quite often.

However, another part of the fun for me is the Zen part. Other people may meditate, but I'm simply too energetic for that and cannot sit still for a long time without a purpose. But at least when I sharpen a knife, I have a purpose. And then the activity of sharpening makes me relax. Now I know how to sharpen a knife, I can do it pretty much without thinking. And it's very relaxing. That's also what I love about sharpening.

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