Alcohol on the strops....

Posted by cbwx34 - 28 Jan 2013 18:30

Ok, so I'm a bit stubborn. I know Clay and others have talked about adding alcohol to the leather strops... but I've avoided it. I've tried to adopt a KISS attitude, and didn't want to mess with it.

But today, being in the mood to experiment, I did a few knives and sprayed a bit of alcohol on the strops before using. What a difference. One thing I noticed that I hadn't anticipated, was how "crisp" it left the edge after stropping.

I looked and didn't see any, has Clay done any microscope photos of edges done with and without alcohol? Wonder if a difference can be seen? Maybe I (or someone) can track down some he's done both ways and put them up for comparison.

Se, I'm sold... for now at least.
Thought I'd see what others think of this... especially if you've done it both ways.

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Re: Alcohol on the strops....

Posted by cbwx34 - 29 Jan 2013 07:22

I tried it with the WE diamond pastes.

I'd say just give it a try... I don't see any long term effect if you don't like it. You're right, they seem to return to "normal" when they dry. (Of course it's only been a day).

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Re: Alcohol on the strops....

Posted by PhilipPasteur - 29 Jan 2013 08:27

Curtis,

Yes you are right, and I will try it.

Just trying to get a handle on what other folks are seeing.

Makes me very curious when folks talk about significant differences but don't say what the difference(s)

is/are

Was...still am, up all night trying to fix my mail server.

No doubt babblig... in text, a bit.

Phil

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Re: Alcohol on the strops....

Posted by ApexGS - 29 Jan 2013 13:54

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It's definitely not easy to describe, but as Curtis mentioned there doesn't seem to be any lasting downside to trying it out. The strops dry out normally, and will actually dry pretty fast even while using it so for blades you're putting extra polish on you might need to re-apply a little.

I'm wondering the same thing as you, Phil... does the damp strop increase friction and boost the "smearing" effect we've seen with Clay's microscope images? That seems to be the most logical conclusion without delving into it on the microscope level.

I'm using the Pro Pack WEPS pastes on leather, and this reminds me to recharge my strops sometime soon too!

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Re: Alcohol on the strops....

Posted by Geocyclist - 29 Jan 2013 22:52

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Phil,

I have only used WE diamond pastes on both balsa and leather, mostly leather.

I have done 3-5 knives without, and 10+ with.

By big difference I mean:

Leather - can feel immediately much more grab on the strop. I have had the base come off the table (just 1 corner) twice. And I am not trying to do this.

Balsa - strange, first 2 strokes each side make it even more slippery, like fresh paste or like stopping with ice, then after 2 stokes they grab almost like the leather does.

As far as results I can't say much or quantify other than to say I get the same results with fewer strokes than without alcohol. I also notice the affect does not last for ever, but at least 20-30 strokes per side, then I am close to moving on anyway.

Before I got my WE I read about how Clay got the base come up during stopping. I didn't believe it. When I got my WE I still didn't believe it when stopping without alcohol. After the base lifted the first time I understood. I do not want the base to come up, and I am trying to use moderate pressure, the grip is just that strong (at least while the alcohol is still fresh).

Like I said before, it doesn't add much to my work flow since I already use it for cleaning. I can't tell it is damaging the strops, the affect is positive, or at least reduces stopping time.

Since I started using it I have not stopped. I think there is a real effect here. That being said I don't know if it helped, or just that my strops are now "seasoned" and the seasoned strops produce the additional grip? I will have to try it now without to see. I have read once about Clay talking about stops getting "seasoned" but not much else.

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Re: Alcohol on the strops....

Posted by PhilipPasteur - 30 Jan 2013 01:57

Thanks everyone for the feedback.

I will have to give it a try!

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Re: Alcohol on the strops....

Posted by ApexGS - 30 Jan 2013 16:30

I just tried regular old water in a mist spray on the leather strops last night and oddly... it doesn't seem to work anywhere near as well as alcohol. It does have a bit more grab to it but not the super amount of

grab Geocyclist describes above. It doesn't seem nearly as effective and may even have lifted some of the paste out of the leather... at least the black spots now have brown showing through after using water!

It seems like the unique properties of rubbing alcohol require further study

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Re: Alcohol on the strops....

Posted by Geocyclist - 30 Jan 2013 17:20

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An interesting point is that Smoke Eater, and I think others use alcohol to clean stops. Of course this involves a lot a alcohol and scrubbing the strop with something. But it is interesting that just a little make them work better, but also it is used for cleaning.

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