

# Frequently Asked Piercing Questions

## **What kind of carver can be used for piercing?**

- *Dremel, at about 20,000 RPM, with a flex shaft and a piecing drill bit, available from Treeline. Very hard to control.*
- *Micromotor, at about 45,000 RPM, available from multiple sources. I have not used these.*
- *Air powered turbine, at 400,000 -500,000 RPM. These include dental drills. I use a Vortex.*
- *High speed piercing is better than low speed piercing.*

The following answers are based on using a high-speed air powered turbine carver:

## **How much air is required for a high speed air carver?**

*Check the carver's requirements, but generally, they use about 1-1/2 cfm at less than 40 psi. The compressor should be at least twice this big. If you're buying a compressor, get a quiet one. Oil-less compressors are cheap and portable, however they have been inherently loud, but technology is changing. A very small compressor will cycle too frequently, and/or run continuously. For me, larger, oil type compressors are quieter, and better. I use a 5 hp, 150 psi compressor that serves all of my shop. The proper regulators can be used to meter the air to the carver.*

## **What kind of wood do you try to use for piercing?**

*I really like hard maple, but I've used a number of different woods and do not have any on the "never use again" list.*

## **What thickness of wood do you shoot for to make piercing easier?**

*I try to get about 1/16" thickness, plus or minus. 1/32" to 3/32" works. Thicker than 3/32" takes forever, and will wear your carver much quicker.*

## **Do you draw the areas to pierce before you start?**

*I sometimes use light pencil lines, drawing circular rings around the piece, while it's still on the lathe, just to keep rows of holes in line. I have also used "longitudinal" lines for patterns such as brick. These lines should be light enough that they sand away easily by hand. I do not pre-draw shapes.*

## **Is there any particular pattern or is it all random amoeba-shaped areas?**

*The pattern and shape for the holes should be left up to the expression of the artist. I like to keep the web near a constant width.*

## **What bits do you use? Treeline?**

*Treeline is a good source for carbide burs. Your dentist could be a good source, as well, for used burs that he may throw away. I like the "long fissure," similar to the No. 56, or the "long cross cut tapered fissure," No. 699L. Don't stock up on too many until you decide what's good for you.*

**Do you use magnification or face/breathing protection when you work?**

*I wear trifocals, so I guess I do get a little magnification. I always wear glasses, and breathing protection is always a good idea. I like to set up a fan blowing across the work to keep from breathing smoke, as well as dust. This is best done with the fan blowing toward the outside.*

**Do you trace around the outside of each area a few times and then bore down or what is your normal procedure for piercing?**

*I try to remove the wood with one continuous cut.*

**When you have an oops and cut into an adjacent opening, what do you do?**

*I try to keep the area of each opening the same size, but that's not required. Accidentally cutting through the web could be an opportunity to introduce other random size holes making the piece unique to you. If it needs repair, carve out a little more of the damaged web, pick up a hole off the floor, carve it to fit, and glue it in. Re-carve after the glue has dried, and be more careful this time. The glue joints will be hard to find.*

**How do you “clean up” the inside surfaces of the cuts when you're finished?**

*Piercing normally leaves a burned edge that I go back to and “dust off,” lightly touching the surface this time to keep from building up heat. The direction of the cut is opposite of the way you would route the edge of a board. This also removes any unpleasant, sharp detail that doesn't match the design. Sometimes, with softer woods, or a piece that already has finish applied, there can be fuzz or a dark, burned finish left on the inside. This generally can be removed though the opening, using an angled dental type scraper.*

**What finish do you use?**

*SprayLacquer is a good choice of finish for piercings. Paints and stains can also be used, especially when creating a contrast between inside and outside surfaces.*