

Care and Use of Water Stones

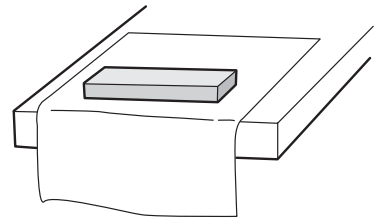
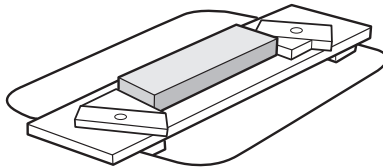
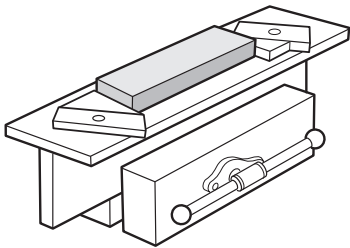
Used with water as a lubricant and flushing agent, water stones are generally quite porous and should be immersed for about five minutes to saturate them before use. They can then be stored in a container of water so they are ready for use at all times.

There are two exceptions. Natural water stones **should not** be kept in water and finer man-made water stones (6000x and 8000x) on wooden bases need only to be wetted immediately before use.

When sharpening with a water stone, keep the surface well wetted to flush away swarf and keep freshly released particles exposed. Before changing stones (e.g., from a 1200x to 6000x), let the slurry build up as you press the tool more lightly on the stone. This slows the abrasion rate because the build-up contains smaller, fractured abrasive particles, and the reduced force decreases the depth of abrasion. This lets you achieve the desired finish faster after switching to a finer stone. As you approach the end of the process on the second stone, allow slurry to build while pressing the tool more lightly.

Water stones tend to wear faster than oil stones – the key to their rapid cutting rate. Be sure to keep your stone flat. To promote even wear, use the full surface of the stone and occasionally turn the stone end for end. A fine stone can be trued by rubbing it against a coarser one. The coarser stone should first be trued on wet-dry sandpaper (220x works well) laid on an accurately flat surface, such as a piece of plate glass or a machined bed.

To hold a stone while sharpening, you can use a simple wooden jig clamped in a vise or bridged across a sink or laundry tub. Alternatively, a piece of rubber floor runner draped over the end of a workbench works well.



Caution: *Do not allow water stones to freeze when they are wet; they will fracture.*