

Japanese Wooden Planes

Like Japanese saws, Japanese planes are pulled, not pushed. They can be pushed, but cutting control is better on the pull stroke. These planes are similar to traditional Japanese planes with white oak bodies; however, a metal chip breaker with a capscrew replaces the traditional wooden wedge. The high-carbon steel blades will hold a keen edge to achieve tissue-thin shavings, even in difficult woods.

Setting the blade is done with gentle taps from a light mallet or a plane hammer. To facilitate blade adjustment, the capscrew should neither be too tight nor too loose. All planes require a bit of practice in setting up the blade to achieve the final cut, but once there, perform remarkably well.

As with any product made from wood, these planes will react to local humidity levels. In a heated shop (where humidity can be very low), wood contraction can bind the blades in the bodies. Be prepared to shave a bit of wood from the throat sides if you will be using them in very dry conditions.

Increasing the Depth of Cut

To advance the blade, hold the plane firmly in one hand and tap either the front of the plane or the end of the blade with the hammer. Use light taps at first to develop a good feel for the amount of force required to move the blade a predictable amount. Sight down the sole of the plane to ensure the blade edge is parallel to the sole and adjust as required.

Decreasing the Depth of Cut

To decrease the depth of cut, rap the heel of the plane body with the hammer. Tighten capscrew as needed.

Adjusting the Skew

To adjust the blade for even shaving thickness, tap either side of the blade with the hammer until the blade edge is parallel to the sole.

Removing the Blade

To remove the blade, loosen the capscrew and rap the heel of the plane body with the hammer until the blade is loose enough to remove by hand. Alternatively, turn the plane body upside down, clamp the blade edges in a woodworking vise (equipped with soft pads or wooden jaw liners), and drive the body off by tapping its heel.