

TURNING ANTLER (# WXANTLER)

Antler is one of the most challenging and rewarding of all the alternate turning materials. This is a renewable resource that is naturally shed by deer, antelope, elk, and moose. Turned antler pens are beautiful and quite unique.

PREPARING PEN BLANKS

Antler material is naturally curved, so finding relatively straight pieces for pen making is challenging but not impossible. Fortunately pen blanks are short and each pound of bulk antler should provide enough turning material for 4-6 pens. (The rest can be used for key chains and other products – see TIP.)

The antler core material is soft, so drilling a hole for the brass tubes is relatively easy. But because of the porous nature of this material, it is advisable to use a generous amount of thick epoxy glue ((#PKGLUE2) or polyurethane glue (#TITEBOND) when gluing in the brass tubes to insure a good bond. Trim the ends of the blanks once the glue has set.

TURNING THE ANTLER

The challenge of turning antler is in the dual hardness of the material. As discussed above, the inner core is soft, while the outer material is extremely hard. It is possible to have both core and exterior material showing in a single pen blank.

First make sure you have very sharp tools. Turn the material down to the desired profile. The tricky part is in the sanding stage. The porous core will tend to pick up the sanding grit and darken, something akin to acne “black-heads.” Depending on the project and the appearance you want, you may want to prevent this from happening, or just polish and wax over the blank as is.

If you want to avoid the darkening of the core antler material when sanding, flood the blank with thick cyanoacrylate (super glue) to fill in the pores. Next lightly sand with a fine grit abrasive, then use the Novus Hi-Gloss Plastic Polish System (#PKNOVUSX), repeating the process as necessary to gain a smooth, polished finish.

This can also be accomplished without the use of glue by using a skew at the end and smoothing the antler material as best as possible. Then use the plastic polish, (but no sand paper!)

FINISHING THE BARRELS

No matter which of the methods you have used above, wax the polished barrels with a good wax like Shellawax Cream (#PKSWAX). Press the pen kit together with the rest of the components. The resulting antler pen you've created will make a unique and attractive keepsake.

NOTE : Antler was a natural living tissue, so when turning it, a peculiar odor may be arise. If objectionable, use a dust collector at the point of turning to vent this odor.

TIP : If you want to retain the natural points or ends of the antler material for key chains or pen tops, use the PSI Mini-Grip 2 (#C4JSYS) to hold the tip. Turn down the rest of the antler to kit specifications. If you accidentally removed too much of the antler core material and want to salvage the blank, build up the pen barrel with epoxy clay (PSI Sculpt # POXY1). Fill the gap, then turn and sand until the proper diameter has been restored. If your color match is good, the clay will look just like the antler.