Tools for Peeling and Shaping

Bark Spuds (Peeling Spuds)

Use a bark spud to peel green logs. They have a 3 to 4-foot-long handle and weigh about 4 pounds. Position the log about hip high. Hold the tool firmly with both hands and push the dished blade lengthwise along the log under the bark. Always pry away from your body. Three sharpened edges make this tool unusually hazardous to use and transport. Be mindful of the blade when working or walking near others.

Carry the spud at your side. Grip the handle near the middle and walk with the cutting edges away from your body and down. Maintain the original shape of the cutting blade when sharpening. Use a file and a whetstone on each edge on both sides.

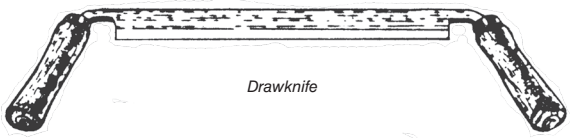




A drawknife peels the bark off of logs.

Drawknives

Drawknives work best to peel dry logs. A standard drawknife has an 8- to 10-inch blade with perpendicular handles at each end and is 4 to 5 inches long.

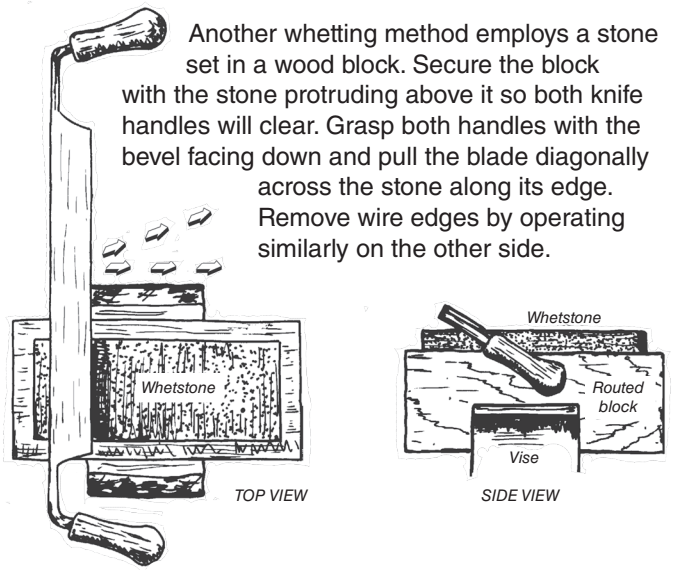


For greatest efficiency, position the log about waist high. When using the drawknife, grasp both handles so the beveled edge of the blade faces the log. Begin each stroke with arms extended and pull the tool toward you while keeping even pressure on the blade. Keep fingers clear of blade corners. Since the knife shaves to attain a flat surface, the largest strips will come from log edges.

You can change the thickness of shavings by rocking the blade back and forth on the edge bevel. Practice will yield proficiency.

Carry drawknives by one handle and at your side. Sharpen drawknives with a file or grinder. Maintain the edge bevel at 33°, and keep the blade cool to preserve the temper. Finish with a whetstone. Whet the blade by holding one handle with the blade facing up and securing the other. Hold the stone on the blade flat against the bevel and move it across the blade in a circular motion. When a wire edge forms on the full length of the blade, lightly whet the flat side to remove it.

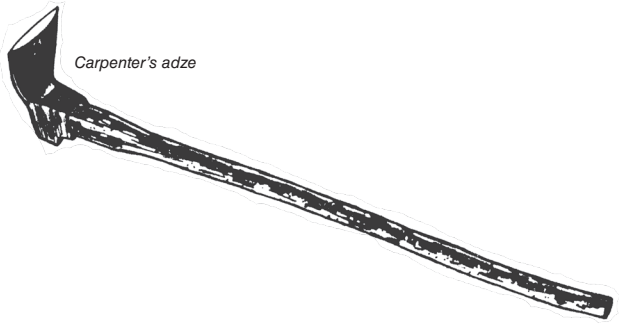
Another whetting method employs a stone set in a wood block. Secure the block with the stone protruding above it so both knife handles will clear. Grasp both handles with the bevel facing down and pull the blade diagonally across the stone along its edge. Remove wire edges by operating similarly on the other side.



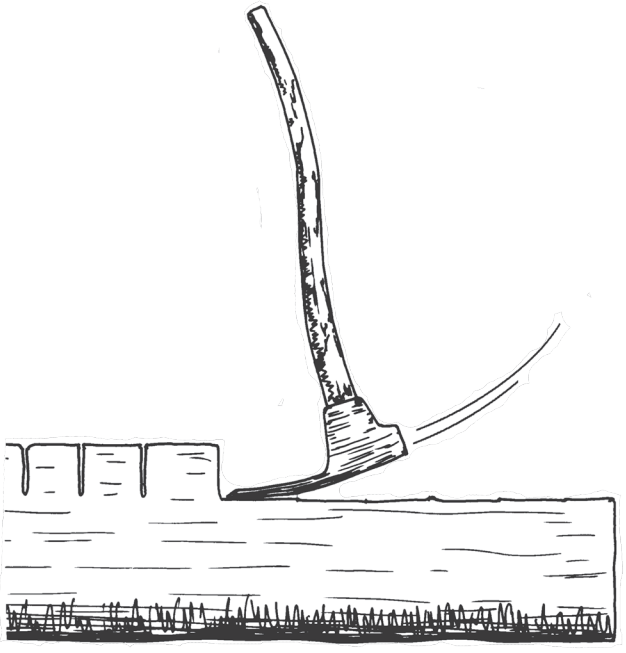
Sharpening a drawknife using a stone set in a wood block.

Carpenter's Adzes (Cutting Adzes)

This tool trims and shapes wood surfaces like hewed timbers or flattened logs. The cutting edge is 4 to 7 inches wide and 8 to 10 inches long. Adze heads weigh from 3 to 5 pounds with a cutting blade set perpendicular to the handle. The blade curves from the front of the head to the cutting edge, roughly matching the arc of the curved handle.

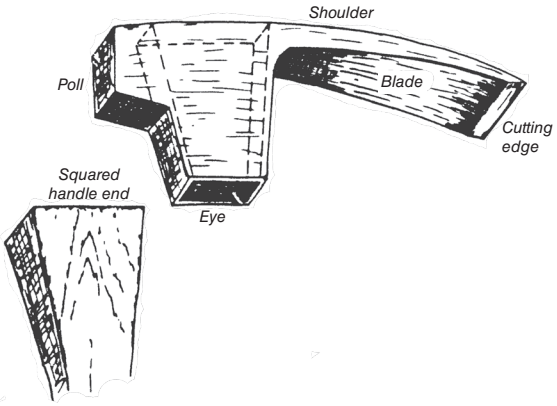


To use a cutting adze, stand astride or on top of the log to be hewed. Grip the handle with both hands and swing it with short strokes in a pendulum motion along the log. Use your thigh as a stop for your arm and to control the depth of the cut. When standing on a log and swinging, take care to position yourself to miss your feet and legs.



Hewing a log with a carpenter's adze.

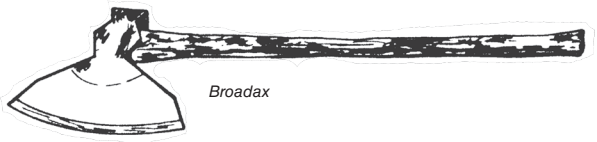
A square tapered eye and handle end allows the head to tighten when swung, but also allows its removal for carrying and sharpening. Some adzes may have a small set screw to further secure handles to heads. Keep the adze sharp. Maintain the cutting edge by regularly "touching it up" with a whetstone. If the blade needs reshaping, grind the edge bevel on the underside to 30°. Finish with a whetstone.



Detail of the carpenter's adze head.

Broadaxes

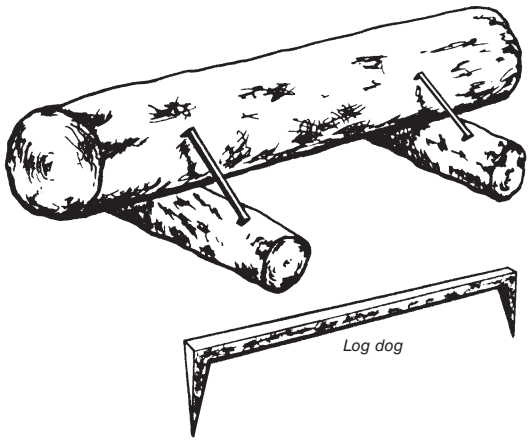
Use a broadax for hewing if no adze is available. Position the log so that scores are on one side and perpendicular to the ground. Depending on the size of the log, stand on the side opposite the scores or on top of the log. Large logs may require you to work on the same side as the scores.



Additional safety hazards exist when hewing with a regular ax. Maintain control of the ax by grasping the handle near the middle with hands several inches apart. Use short swings to sever scored sections. Work the length of the log in one direction to remove most of the wood, then reverse directions for smoothing. Be extremely careful of glancing blows; work slowly and carefully. Frequent rest periods will help ensure efficiency and safety.

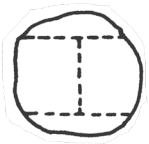
Hew logs in the following manner:

1—Elevate the log onto two short cross pieces and anchor it with log dogs. Log dogs are timber workers' clamps. One end is driven into the log and the other into a stable support. The log is held in place and both of the worker's hands are free for hewing.

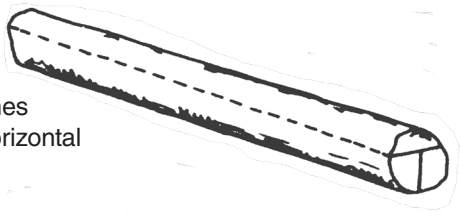


Log dogs steady the log while it is being hewn.

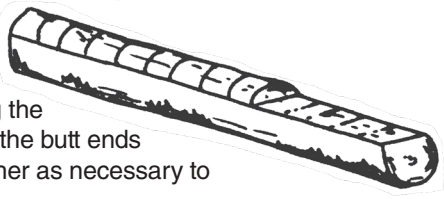
2—Mark a plumb line down the center of one end and a horizontal line perpendicular to it. Be sure to place the horizontal line deep enough to attain the desired width of finished flat surface.



3—Repeat the procedure at the opposite end and snap two chalk lines connecting the horizontal end lines.



4—Using an ax or saw, score the log to the depth of the chalk lines, making the grooves parallel to the butt ends and as close together as necessary to hew a flat surface.



5—Hew (remove) the scored sections with an adze or broadax. If you use a broadax, hew the log face perpendicular to the ground rather than parallel, as shown here. The remaining sides may be marked, scored, and hewed as necessary.