

SOLENT GUILD OF WOODCARVERS & SCULPTORS

GUIDELINES FOR INITIAL WOOD CARVING GOUGES

The Guild has two sets of basic carving tools which are available for loan to new carvers. The following are suggestions for an initial set of wood carving gouges. There is no hard and fast rule as it may depend on the carving being carried out. You could ask ten carvers on their recommendation and you would get ten different answers! The following are only suggestions based on experience and at the end of the day it is up to the user which gouges and make are obtained.

Size (mm)	Sweep Number (London Pattern)	Type
25	5	Straight
12	6	Straight
6	11	Straight
12	16	Curved
12	54x6	Fishtail
18	2	Straight

The above can vary, e.g. a 18mm No. 6 is just as usable as a 25mm No. 5.

Gouges come in a range of sweeps and sizes and can be straight, curved, spoons or fishtail. There are also other 'specials', e.g. skew, V-shaped, etc.

Once an initial set has been obtained the carver can then obtain more of different sizes, shapes and make as required. Note that you should expect to pay £30 plus for each gouge new; anything less then the quality is questionable. Second-hand gouges are also acceptable and in some cases are better than new ones; expect to pay £8 upwards. It is suggested that a 'boxed-set' is not obtained as it may contain many gouges that are not required and certainly not until you have gained some experience and decided you like carving.

There are several manufacturers; see the Suppliers section for details.

Sometimes gouges with smaller handles and reduced length are preferred. Ashley Iles provide a limited 'Zoe Gertner' range of straight gouges, which are of the same quality the standard tools, but are about 1" shorter and a third thinner, making them light and easy to use. Ideal for wood carvers who specialise in smaller pieces of work.

Look after your tools. Don't just throw them in a bag/case. It's worth using a tool roll or stored in a case with dividers or foam slots.

In addition the following are required (at some stage):

1. Carver's mallet (£25+). However there is no reason why a joiner's mallet or even a piece of wood could be used.
2. A 'chisel roll' (£18+) or a box as the collection gets larger.
3. Sharpening stone or wheel – so many types that it is difficult to say which is best.
4. A small first aid kit.