

HERTS & BEDS WOODTURNERS

An Aid to Turning Flat Surfaces

We all know how difficult it can be to get a perfectly flat surface inside a platter and it is even more difficult to flatten a large disc, such as for a table top. One approach is to use the fingers of the left hand holding a scraper as a stop to slide along the tool rest, which has been set at a right angle to the axis. Unfortunately, most tool rests are not very long and the fingers do not hold the tool perfectly steady. Here is one possible solution.

The tool rest takes the form of a square section bar (20 mm square, 500 mm long) mounted on the tool post by a threaded hole in the centre. I have used hard aluminium alloy because I happened to have it, but a hollow square section in mild steel would do very well and is available in B & Q. It should be made very smooth with fine abrasive. The other essential component is a block slotted to fit over the scraper and with a screw to lock it in place. I used a block of Tufnol, but PTFE would be suitable and should slide very nicely on the tool rest.

To set up the tool rest first turn a narrow flat at the outer extent of the required flat area. Then line up the rest so that it is spaced equally at the near and far sides of the work. For this it is convenient to use two equal spacing pieces. Now the slider is clamped on the scraper so that when it bears against the rest it just touches the work surface. The scraper can then be moved steadily out from the centre. One or two adjustments will enable one to get a perfectly flat surface.



This long tool rest can also be useful for turning long spindles and the same principle makes it easy to make a perfectly parallel spindle or a length with a uniform taper.

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