

# Turning a Bottle Stopper

By Carl B. Ford III, Studio Woodturner, May 26, 2013, [www.carlford.us](http://www.carlford.us)

Turning Bottle Stoppers is a great way to improve your turning skills. It is also a great way to use up little scraps of wood or experiment with exotic woods.

I turn bottle stoppers so I have some low priced items to sell. I want to draw people in to look at my higher priced items.

Here is the quick and easy process I use to turn Bottle Stoppers.

## Finished Bottle Stopper

Hey! That should be "Woodturner" cider, not "Woodpecker"!



## Drill Blank

Start with a blank that is roughly 1-1/2" square by 3" long. In this case the blank is a chunk of Walnut. Cherry Wood is another good alternative.

Start by drilling a hole that matches the size of your bottle stopper dowel. In this case I am drilling a hole with a drill that is 1/64 of an inch smaller than 3/8" so I will get a tight fit.

I like to use my new Self Centering Vise on my drill press. For more info see <http://blog.carlford.info/2013/05/11/self-centering-vise-pen-drilling-vise.aspx>



## Glue Dowel into Blank

Glue a dowel into your blank. In this case I am using some fancy bottle stopper dowels that are 3/8" diameter on one end and 1/2" on the other.

I like to use yellow glue. I let it dry over night.

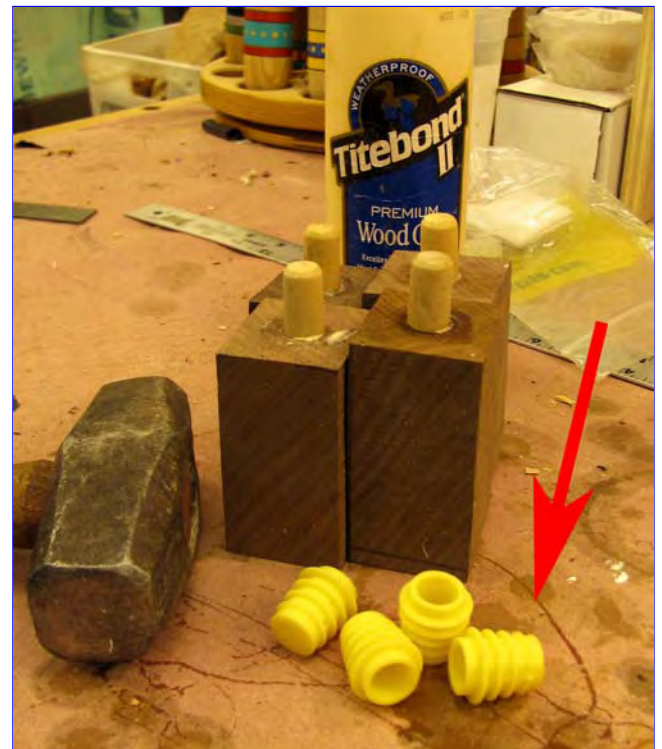
I use a small sledge hammer to drive the dowel into to the hole in 1 or 2 blows. This way, I don't bugar up the end of the dowel with lots of lightweight hammer pounding.



## Silicon Rubber Caps

4 blanks ready to go. This photo shows the yellow silicone rubber caps that slip on over the dowels to create a nice bottle stopper.

The fancy metal bottle stoppers may look better but I have found that silicone rubber stoppers work better in the kitchen.



## Mount Blank on Lathe

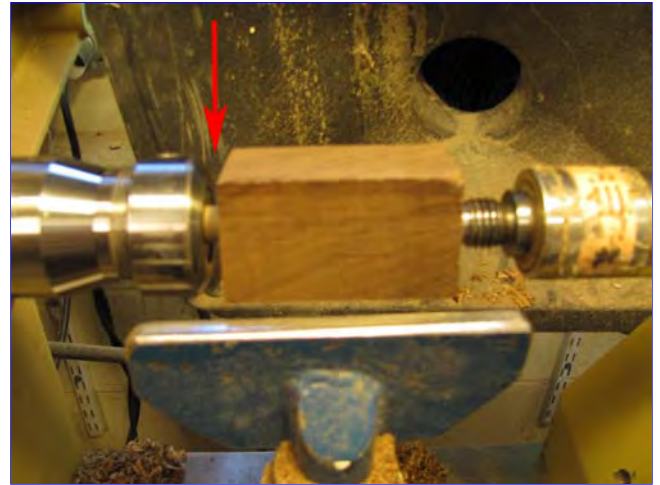
Here is the bottle stopper blank mounted on lathe ready to go.

I like to mount bottle stoppers in my Collet Chuck with a 1/2" collet. For more info see <http://blog.carlford.info/2013/03/19/collet-chucks.aspx>

The Collet chuck makes life easy. Positive drive, that does not slip. The bottle stopper stays put after you part off so you can easily sand the top of your new bottle stopper. The Collet chuck is small so it does not get in the way or bust your knuckles.

Notice the 3/8" gap between the Collet chuck and blank. This is the real reason I use a Collet chuck. You can tighten the collet down so it grips rock solid with that gap in there. This leaves room for you to turn the bottom of the bottle stopper with out a lot of extra dorking around. See next photo.

Sorry this photo is out of focus.

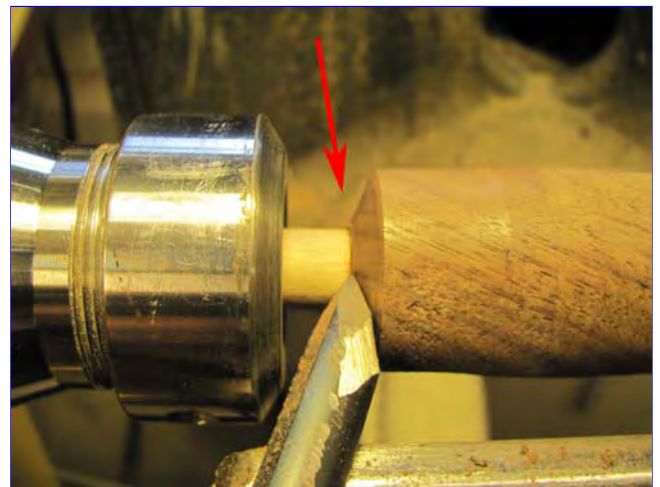


## Turn the Bottom

Turn the bottom of the bottle stopper.

I leave a 3/8" gap between Collet chuck and blank when I mount the blank. This allows me to easily turn the bottom of the bottle stopper with a detail gouge or skew. A detail gouge with a Michael Hosaluk style double bevel works great.

I want to be able to sell my bottle stoppers cheap. But, I want them to look great. Thus method keeps the price low because I can turn everything at the same time.

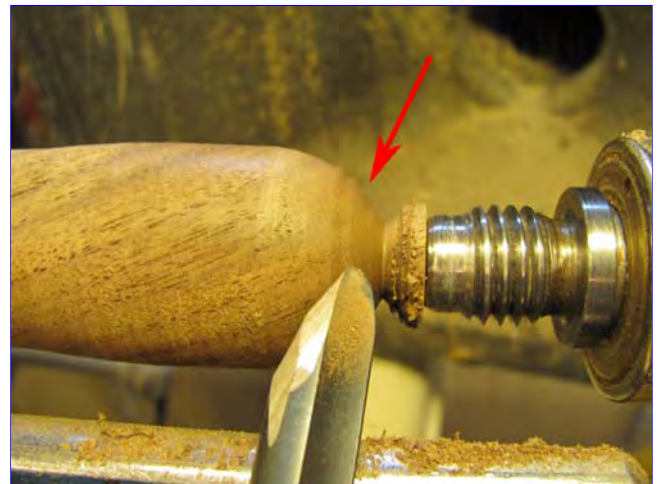


## Turn the Top

Time to turn the top of the bottle stopper.

Turning bottle stoppers is a great way to practice your turning skills.

This photos shows me using a detail gouge to turn the right hand side of a ball that will form the top of my bottle stopper. Turning a perfect ball free hand (no jigs, etc) is a great learning exercise.



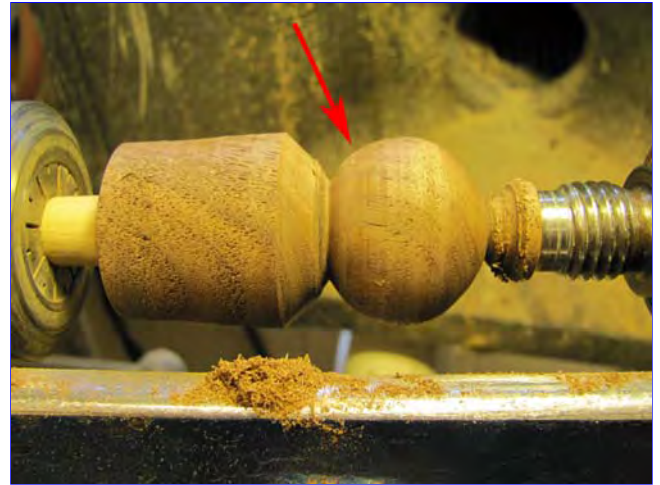
## Finish Up Ball

Time to turn the left half of the ball.

Notice the relief cut to the left of red arrow. I cut this with my detail gouge as needed while turning the left half of the ball.

I turn the left half of the ball by looking at the right half of the ball and matching the shape. I go back and forth between the left and right halves of the ball until they match.

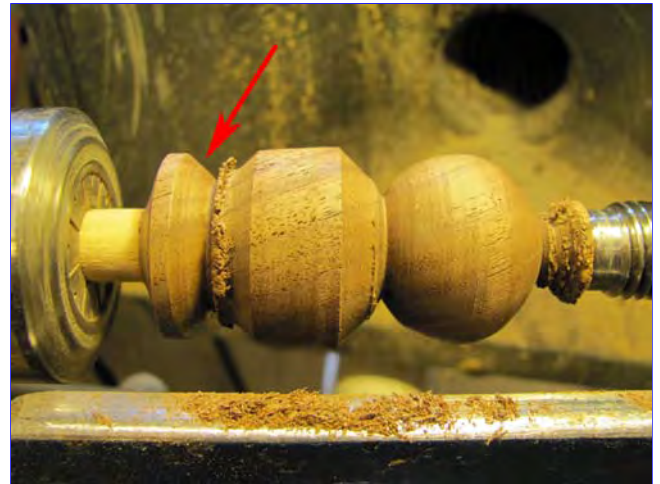
Here, I stopped to take the photo when things were close but not perfect. The right half still needs a little work. It is a little too pointy near tail stock. I fixed this up later when I was double checking things before parting off.



## Turn Top of Bottom

Time to form the top of the bottom of the bottle stopper. Do this now. After we get it roughed in, then we just need to blow away the rest of stuff between bottom and ball.

Again notice the relief cut right of the red arrow. I left this ragged for the photo.

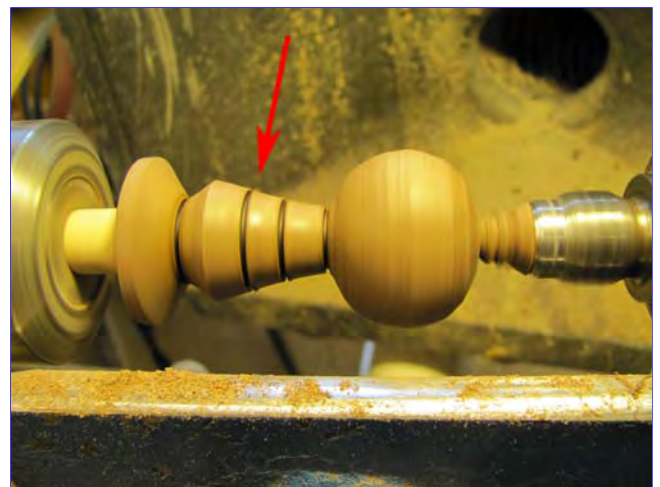


## Done Turning

Done turning. Time to sand. This photo is with the lathe running.

I used my detail gouge to wipe out the stuff between bottom and ball. Turn something interesting in here. I like to just make up the shape as I go. Let it fall out. When I see something I like, I stop.

In this case I burned in a couple of lines with guitar string. Guitar strings work better than piano wire, etc for burning lines because guitar strings have a grooved surface. A guitar string is really a fine wire wrapped around a wire core.



## Sand and Buff

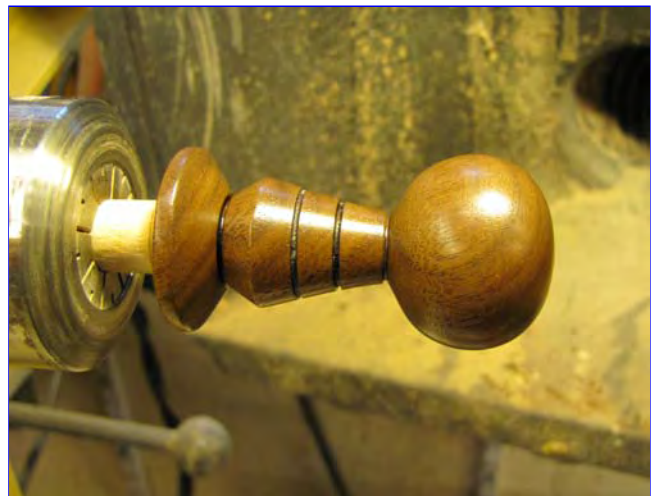
Sanded and buffed. Ready for finish.

I sanded with 120, 180, 220. Then buffed at high speed with fine synthetic steel wool (scotch brite pad) followed by buffing with a cloth shop towel.



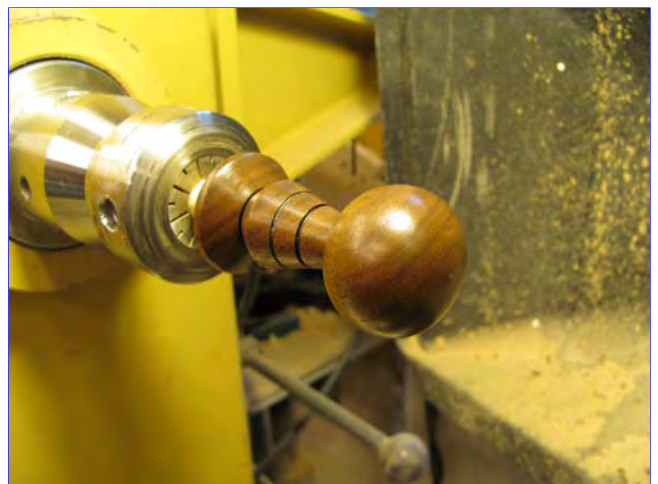
## Apply Finish

After finishing with 2 coats of "Hut Crystal Coat"



## Finished Bottle Stopper

The finished bottle stopper.



## Install Rubber Stopper

Finished bottle stopper with silicon rubber stopper slipped on over the dowel.

