

Let's Carve an Ear

Dale Hall



Tools and Materials:

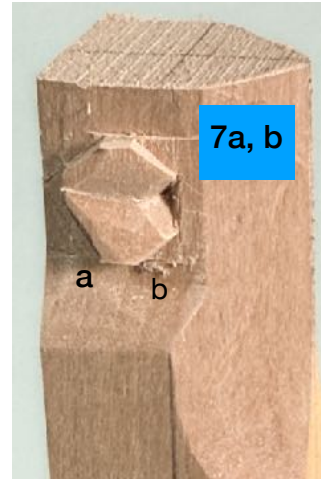
- Straight blade carving knife.
- 1" x 1" x 4" basswood blank.
- Optional: Very Fine (~400-600 grit) flexible abrasive — e.g., Abranet or flexible sandpaper.

1. Mark center lines on the long dimension of all four sides and on the ends of the blank.
2. Slice along along the grain to pare away the corners along two adjacent long sides as shown. (These planes define the face in front of the ears.) Paring about half the length is enough to practice one or more pairs of ears.
3. Mark out an ear on each side behind the face planes. The top should be ~ 3/16" below the top of the blank. (The top of the ear also defines the brow line of the face.) Mark the bottom of the ear about 1/2" below the top of the ear. Mark the back of the ear about 1/8" in from the back. Also draw lines behind the ears, set in about 1/8" on the back. (These lines define the ear thickness.) NOTE: You can ensure that your two ears are equal in height by extending the top and bottom lines around the back, as shown.



4. (a) Make scoring cuts about 1/8" deep around the top, bottom, and back of the ear. Starting with the areas above the top and bottom of each ear, remove wood to a depth of about 1/8". Use the guideline on the back to get the depth right. Cut straight in; don't undercut at this point. (b) Next, do the same for the front of the ear.

5. Remove the corners of the ear. Cut straight in. The lower back corner should be bigger than the others in the vertical direction to give a good ear shape.



6. Taper the ear from the back toward the front with a slicing cut. Leave a thin edge at the front. Optional: Cutting with a slight rotating (twisting) motion will make a slight concave recess in the center of the ear. NOTE: This is a tricky cut. Cut slowly and carefully to avoid splitting off a piece of the ear. Tip: Carve halfway up from the bottom, then switch and carve halfway down from the top.

7. (a) Make a triangular plunge cut along the front of the ear between the upper and lower corners. Then make shallow cuts across the full width of the ear from the top and bottom to eject a chip that creates a shallow recess sloping upward toward the back of the ear. (b) Remove a deeper and shorter triangular chip along the same axis at the front of the ear to define the ear hole.



8. Trim the outer ear corners to create a smoother, curving outside edge. Clean up any knife cuts around the ear on the side of the head.

9. Round over the edges of the ear with your knife. A very light sanding can also help to make the ear look more natural. NOTE: When carving an actual head, undercut slightly behind the edges of the ear on the top, back, and bottom to make the ear stand out.

10. Optional: Set in the brow line and the bottom of the nose with stop cuts, then pare up to the cuts from below. You don't have to follow this rule exactly when carving caricature faces. Higher or lower ears can be interesting.