

Cindy Drozda

"The Fine Art of Woodturning"

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4 Guidelines to Successful Finials

1 - Take away the tailstock.

Removing the "nub" at the tailstock end was a major cause of breaking finials for me. Without the tailstock, I rarely break one on the lathe. The extra support that the tailstock gives is not worth the price to pay!

2 - Balance the cutting forces on the piece.

Equal pressure on either side of center - from the tool that's doing the cutting, and a finger, will support the piece much better than the tailstock would have. I also feel that my finger does more than oppose the cutting forces. It also gives me feedback about how my cuts are going.

3 - Always work on well supported material.

This means to complete each detail before moving on to the next one, working from the tailstock end toward the headstock. It does require more planning of the shape of the finial, because it doesn't really work well to go back to the very tip and "just shave off a little more" after the finial is thin.

4 - Use a light touch and a careful aim.

Probably the most important ingredient in your formula for success! Also perhaps the most difficult to learn. It doesn't pay to get in a hurry. Being able to make a very light cut allows you to fine tune the form, as well as putting less cutting force into the workpiece. And fine details are created by accurate placement of the tool (combined with those "very light cuts").