

Care and Use of Japanese Water Stones

Japanese water stones are quite porous and are designed for use with water as a lubricant and flushing agent. In general, water stones should be filled with water (it takes about 5 minutes immersion) and then kept in a bucket of water or a plastic container so that they are ready for use at all times.

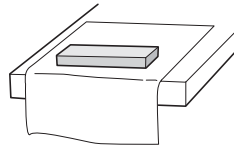
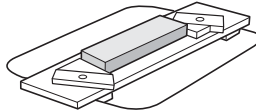
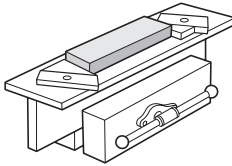
There are two exceptions to this practice. Natural water stones are not kept in water and the finer man-made water stones (6000x and 8000x) on wooden bases don't have to be. They can be wetted a few minutes before use, and will function well.

When sharpening with a water stone, keep the surface well wetted. The water flushes away the swarf and keeps new, sharp particles exposed for good abrasion. Just before you are ready to change stones (e.g., from a 1200x to 6000x), let the slurry build up and reduce the pressure on the tool. This slows the abrasion rate because the build-up contains smaller, broken abrasive particles and the reduced pressure further reduces the depth of abrasion. When you switch to the finer stone, you will achieve the desired finish faster.

Once again, as you approach the end of the process on the second stone, reduce the pressure and allow a slight build-up of slurry. The resultant edge will be better.

Japanese water stones tend to wear faster than oil stones – in fact, this is the secret of their rapid cutting rate. Be sure to keep your stone flat. To promote even wear, use the full surface of the stone and occasionally change the stone end for end. To true a water stone, several methods are available. A fine stone can be trued by rubbing it against a coarser one. The coarser stone should first be trued on wet-dry sandpaper laid on any true surface such as a piece of plate glass or a machined bed. 220x wet-dry paper works well.

To hold your stones in position when using them, a simple wooden jig that can be clamped in a vise or bridged across a sink or laundry tub is useful. Alternatively, a piece of rubber floor runner draped over the end of a workbench works well.



CAUTION: Do not allow your water stones to freeze when they are wet. They will fracture.

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Rev. B

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Printed in Canada.