



# Maintaining Maximum Control

**Learn the correct way to hold  
and maneuver a scroll saw blank**

*By Joanne Lockwood*

The best way to learn scroll saw techniques is to take a class. Unfortunately, that's not always an option for new scrollers. Most beginners jump right into cutting a project and are disappointed with the experience and the results.

Beginners should take the time to learn and practice basic techniques. Experienced scrollers can use the following tips when introducing friends to this rewarding hobby.

One of the most important things to learn is how to hold and maneuver a scroll saw blank. Make a copy of the practice pattern and attach it to your blank (see the methods on page 16). Then, get ready to make some sawdust. After you work through the practice pattern, you'll be ready to tackle more challenging projects.

## HOLDING AND TURNING A BLANK



**DO NOT** hold the very edges of the blank. This can cause you to lose control of the cut as your turn a corner.



**DO** hold the blank with your hands close to the blade.

I position my pinky and thumb on the edge of the blank if possible. This grip provides the most control and prevents the blank from chattering as the action of the saw bounces it off the saw table.



**DO NOT** try to control the majority of the blank with your non-dominant hand. It will be difficult to control the blank if your weaker, less-coordinated hand is doing most of the work.



**DO** position the wood so your stronger, dominant hand controls the largest part of the blank. If you are right-handed, the majority of the wood should be positioned on the right side of the blade.



**DO NOT** put your fingers in front of the blade.

Demonstrators often place their finger on a moving scroll saw blade to show how safe the saws are, but if your finger is held against the wood when you touch the blade, you can get a small slice.



**DO** keep your fingers away from the front of the blade.

You can have your finger in front of the blade as long as it's a good distance from the blade, but a better position is to have your fingers about an inch away from the side of the blade when possible.

## HOLDING AND TURNING A BLANK



**X** **DO NOT** stop and start feeding the wood into the blade as you attempt to cut a circle or sweeping curve. This will produce a rough and choppy edge.



**✓** **DO** feed the wood slowly, but steadily, into the blade as you cut the curve. The more you can keep the feed rate constant, the smoother the overall cut and shape of the curve will be.



**X** **DO NOT** turn off the saw when it is time to make a sharp turn. When you turn the saw back on, it will catch the blank and slam it back down onto the table, possibly breaking your work or pinching your finger.



**✓** **DO** keep the saw running and use your finger as a pivot point. Position your finger behind the blade, apply pressure, and use the finger as a pivot point. Use the opposite hand to rotate the blank. With practice, you can turn the blank without hearing the blade cut any wood.



**X** **DO NOT** maintain a tight grip on your blank for long periods of time. This will cause your neck muscles and back muscles to cramp.

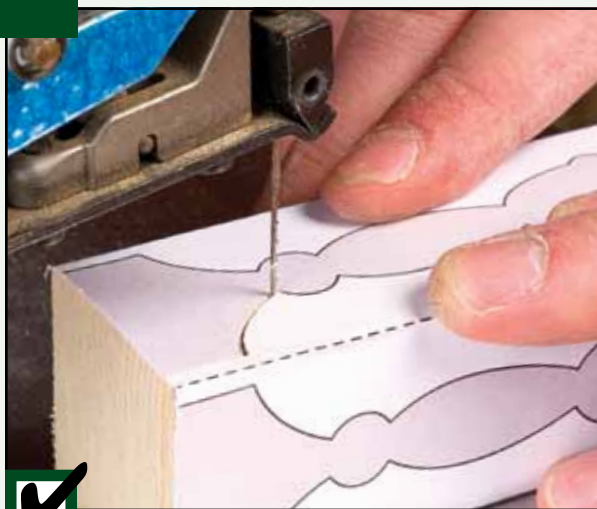


**✓** **DO** stop and relax whenever you feel your muscles tighten up. It doesn't take much effort to hold the blank down. If you feel tension in your neck muscles, stop and roll your head around a few times in both directions. Then, roll your shoulders from front to back and from back to front a few times to relieve the tension.

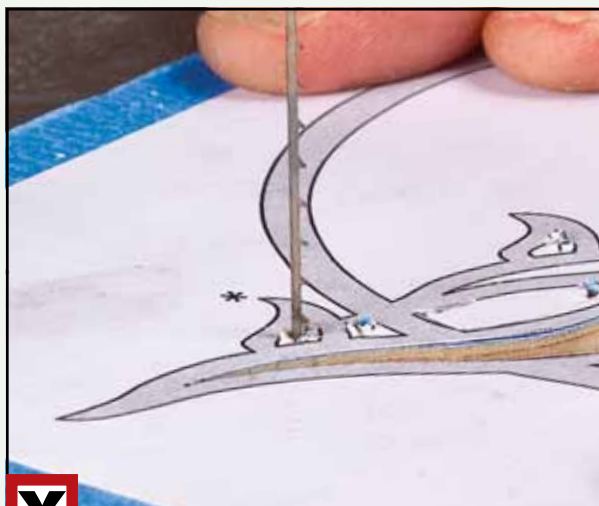
## CHOOSING THE RIGHT BLADE



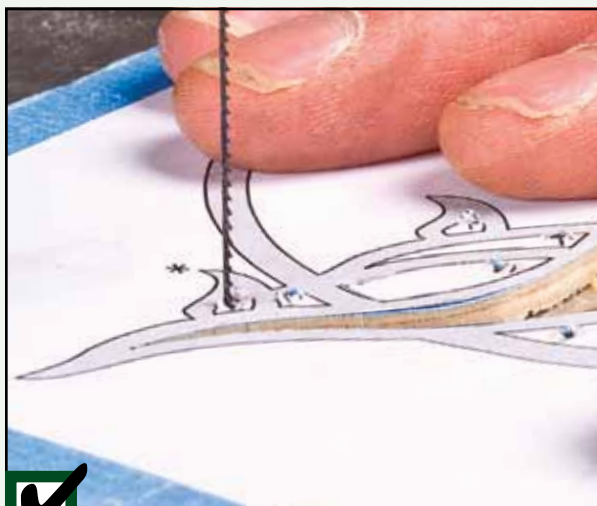
**DO NOT** use a small blade, such as a #3 blade, to cut wood more than  $\frac{3}{4}$ " (19mm) thick. The small blade will dull quickly, burn the wood, and break prematurely.



**DO** use a large blade, such as a #9 blade, to cut thick wood. The large blade clears the sawdust better and cuts faster than a small blade without dulling, burning the wood, or breaking.



**DO NOT** use a large blade, such as a #9 blade, to cut intricate designs in thin wood. The large blade cuts thin wood too quickly, does not fit into tight areas, and can be difficult to control.



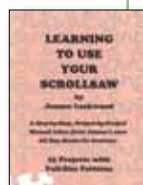
**DO** use a small blade, such as a #3 blade, to cut intricate designs in thin wood. The small blade cuts slower than a large blade, fits into tight corners, and is easier to control.

### Further Reading

#### *Learning to Use Your Scroll Saw*

by Joanne Lockwood

*A step-by-step, project-by-project manual taken from Joanne's all-day, hands-on seminar. Includes twenty-three projects.*



Available for \$9.95 + S&H from Advanced Machinery, 800-727-6553, [www.advmachinery.com](http://www.advmachinery.com). There is also a companion DVD available for \$9.95, or purchase both for \$16.95



#### ONLINE BONUS

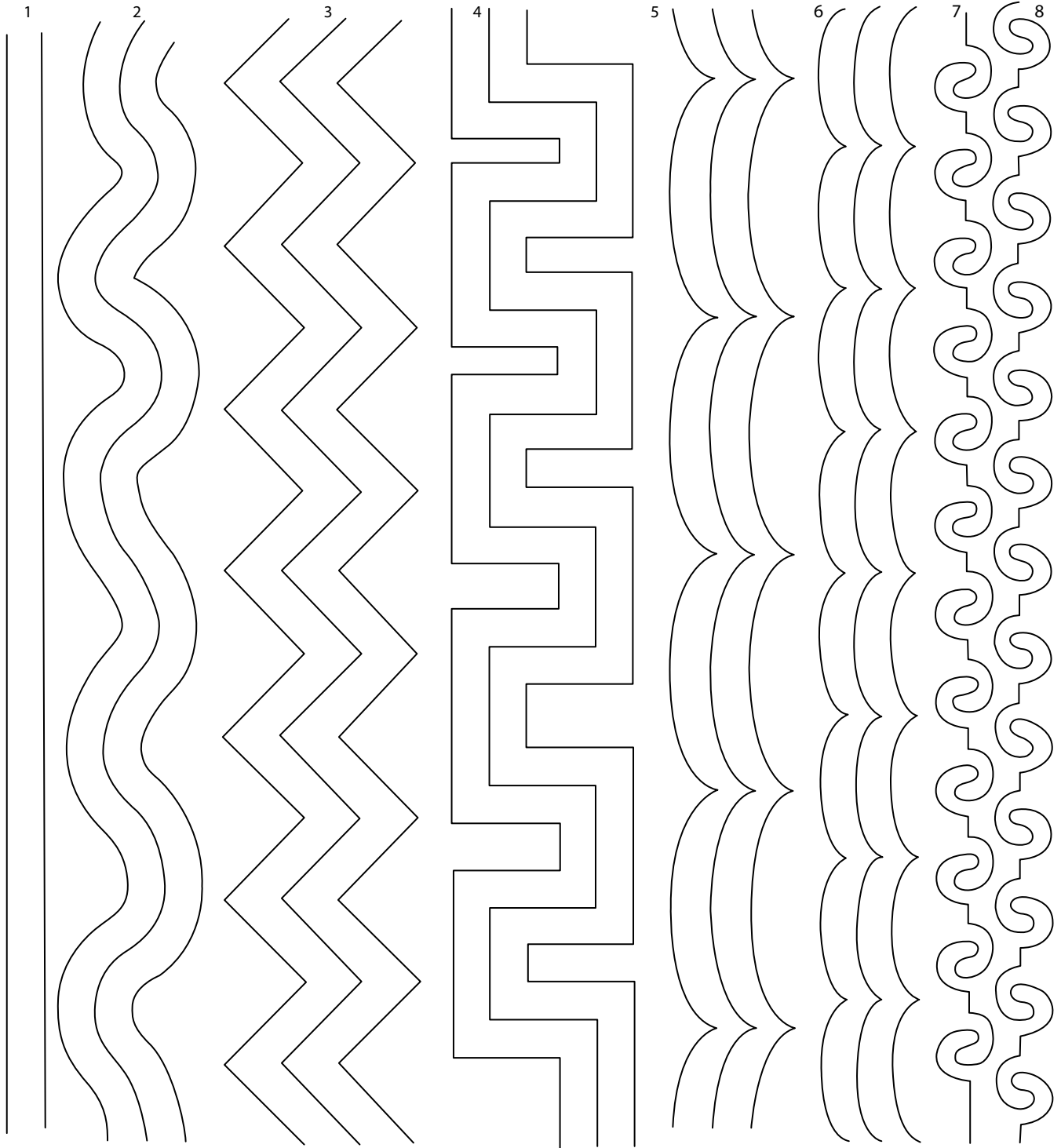
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[www.scrollsawer.com](http://www.scrollsawer.com)



Joanne Lockwood taught scroll sawing for more than twenty years before retiring. She has introduced thousands to scrolling through her books, classes, and patterns. Joanne lives in Sparks, Nev., with her husband, Max.

# Practice board pattern



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