

How to Carve Soap Stone



detail.

Soapstone can be carved in intricate

Soapstone, also known as steatite, is a metamorphic stone comprised mainly of talc, chlorite, dolomite and magnesite. Colors range from creams and blues to reds, browns and blacks. Carving soapstone is considered easier than marble or granite, but it still takes tools and preparation. Beginners are advised to start stone carving with soapstone. Soapstone is durable and can be used in sinks, flooring, dishes and ornamentation. The stone can be carved with a high level of detail.

Things You'll Need

- Safety glasses Dust mask Hammer Files Oil polish Tarp or ground covering Water Wet/dry sandpaper of different grits Polish cloth Gloves Ear plugs Pencil Pitching tool Point chisel Tooth chisel Flat chisel Rondel

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Instructions

1.
 - **1** Prepare the work area by putting down a tarp or ground over. Wear protective equipment at all times, including safety glasses, gloves and a dust mask.
 - **2** Find the bed direction or grain of the stone before carving by looking at the direction of the layers in the stone. Carving against these layers will be harder than carving with the layers. The layers should follow the length of the sculpture to ensure it will not fall apart.
 - **3** Use a pencil to mark where you plan to cut the stone.

- 4 Rough out the design of the sculpture by using the pitching tool and hammer. Place the pitching tool 1-1/2 inches from the end of the stone on a flat and tilt the top away from the edge slightly. Strike the tool with the hammer with a sharp blow to break the edge. Remove as much of the extra material as possible.
- 5 Refine the shape of the soapstone by using a point chisel to cut parallel lines, then breaking off the pieces with the chisel. The Sculpture Studio suggests holding the chisel with the thumb on the outside to keep the hammer from hitting the thumb.
- 6 Smooth the grooves and ridges left by the point chisel with the tooth chisel by holding it at a 45-degree angle and running it over the stone.
- 7 Remove the marks left by the tooth chisel by running the flat chisel over the marks on flat edges. Use the rondel to remove the marks on curved edges.
- 8 Use long, sweeping strokes on the stone, using files to finish and smooth the stone. Different-shaped files can reach into smaller areas.
- 9 Polish the stone with wet/dry sandpaper and water. Start with a rough grit, wet the sandpaper and polish. Let the stone dry. Then use the next-smaller grit and repeat the process.