

Soapstone Tools



Rasps come in a variety of shapes and sizes, allowing you to shape soapstone in many different ways.

Soapstone is also known as steatite, and because it is a very soft stone, it is easily carved into various shapes and sculptures. Carving soapstone produces sculptures with a slightly soapy feel that can be left rough or polished to a high shine. There are several tools that are used for carving soapstone, each with their own effect.

1. Saws

- A saw is used to remove large amounts of stone at once. Sandstone absorbs heat, so it is possible to saw the sandstone without the saw teeth getting too hot from the friction and burning up. A skip tooth saw blade, which has fewer teeth than a regular blade, carries the dust out of the cut as you saw. A mini-hacksaw has a hacksaw blade that is held by one end, which allows you to get the tip of the blade into very small areas.

Chisel

- A chisel is used to flake off smaller areas of stone or to provide texturing. Chisels may be large with a broad flat tip that allows you to take off broad swathes of stone at once, or they may be small, with a V-shaped tip or a wavy tip which will allow you to put texture on the sculpture. Chisels may also be very narrow or they can be wide. The width of a chisel determines how much soapstone you can remove at once.

Hammers

- Hammers and mallets are used to lightly tap the chisels and the force produced knocks off the flakes of stones. The chisel is set into a certain angle in the stone and the hammer forces the chisel to split the stone. It is important to gauge the correct force with which to use the hammer, as overenthusiastic strokes can shatter the soapstone.

Rasps and Files

- Rasps and files are used to shape the soapstone on a small scale. They allow for more delicate shaping than that which is provided by hammer and chisels. Rasps tend to cut more coarsely than files, but they are both handy when used to shape soapstone.