

TURNING A BARREL-SHAPED PURSE

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The barrel purse is actually a fairly simple concept. It is basically a big box with a lid. Since the purse will undergo some wear and tear, it is important to select woods that will stand up to some everyday abuse. I have used pecan, sycamore, maple, mesquite and mahogany. Although ash and oak are sturdy woods and will work well, they are not suitable for some enhancements that you may choose to add.

Turning the bottom of the purse

1. Select an endgrain blank that is relatively free of blemishes. Although I have used blanks with the pith in the center, there is a danger of the wood checking or cracking. The blank needs to measure 5" × 5" × 10" (12.7cm × 12.7cm × 25.5cm). Mount the blank between centers and turn it round. Then turn a tenon on each end.
2. The bottom of the purse will measure between 5"–5 1/2" (12.7cm–6.5cm) high by about 4 1/2" (11.5cm) in diameter. The lid will be about 1 1/2" – 1 3/4" (3.8cm–4.5cm) high. The finished height of the purse will be about 7" – 7 1/4" (17.8cm–18.5cm) (the latter if you wish to carry a checkbook). Mark out the dimensions on the blank allowing for working space at the bottom and top and for the space needed to part off the top from the bottom.
3. Determine what the overall profile of the purse's body will look like. It may be slightly convex, slightly concave, the purse might be shaped like an acorn with a cap—there are many possibilities. When you have decided upon a design, roughly draw that design onto the blank. Part off the top from the bottom. Set the top section aside.
4. Mount the bottom section of the purse into the scroll chuck. Use a parting tool to define the bottom of the purse. Part into the wood about 1/4" (6mm).
5. Use a spindle gouge to begin shaping the outside contour of the purse. True the upper edge of the blank so that the outside 3/4" (20mm) is perfectly flat.
6. Measure in 1/4" from the outside edge and mark this dimension with a pencil. Then measure in 3/4" from the outside edge and also mark this dimension. On the outside of the purse, measure down 1/4" from the top edge and mark this dimension.
7. Use a parting tool to create a shoulder using both 1/4" dimensions as guides. These cuts need to form a 90° angle and will act as the shoulder upon which the outside wall of the lid rests.
8. On the top side of the purse, use the parting tool to plunge into the wood at the 3/4" line. The cut needs to be at least 1/2" (12mm) deep. This will form the shoulder that will

support the cord to be used as the handle and to hide the purse liner. You are now ready to begin hollowing the purse.

9. There are any number of hollowing systems available. I use a "D" handle system with an auxiliary tool rest. Begin to clear away wood from the top interior of the purse body. When you have exposed the 1/2" plunge cut, hollow out beneath this shoulder to a wall thickness of about 1/4". Check the wall thickness often as you follow the outer contour of the purse.
10. Leave a thickness in the bottom of 3/8" (10mm). If you are going to create a sewn liner for the purse, there is no need to sand the interior. If you chose to use flocking as a liner, you will need to sand the interior. Do not sand the exterior yet.
11. Double check your depth measurement and begin parting off the bottom from the waste wood. Stop with about 1" (2.5cm) of the center intact. You may need to make some adjustments after you turn the lid.

Turning the lid

1. Mount the lid blank into your scroll chuck. Measure the depth of the lid to 1 1/2" – 1 3/4" and true the face . Use your spindle gouge to begin turning the desired profile. Proceed cautiously with the shaping, as the lid and the bottom must be the same diameter. Hold the bottom section up to the lid to check for a fit.
2. When the lid and bottom diameters match, measure 1/4" from the outside diameter and 1/4" down into the lid. Plunge the parting tool 1/4" deep and 1/4" in from the outside diameter of the lid.
3. Begin hollowing the lid to a wall thickness of 3/8". This diameter can be slightly reduced beneath the shoulder you created in the last step. Hollow the lid so that the top of the lid will be 1/4" thick.
4. Begin your parting cut making sure that you are maintaining a wall thickness in the top of the lid of 1/4".
5. Before parting off the lid completely, fit the two sections together. You may have to make small adjustments in the contour or in the shoulder fit between the two sections. To do this, bring up the tail stock and place the center point into the hole left earlier by the center point. You will need firm support but the vessel is now hollow, so do not overdo the amount of pressure you apply with the tail stock. Make any adjustments needed to the shape or shoulder fit of the vessel. It is now time to sand the sides of the box.
6. I like to accentuate the line where the lid and bottom come together with a three-point tool or a skew.

Matching the two sections

1. You can now proceed with parting off the waste wood from the lid. To avoid the possibility of tear-out, saw the waste wood away when you have about 1/4" of material left. Then part off the bottom section in the same way.
2. To finish the bottom of the purse, expand the jaws of your scroll chuck into the top opening with firm but not excessive pressure. I like to turn a little ridge around the outside for the purse to sit on. The recess created by the ridge will be about 1/8" (3mm) deep making the thickness of the purse about 1/4" deep at the bottom. You may add other decorative features to the bottom of the purse if desired. Sand the bottom through all grits.
3. Finish the lid in the same way by expanding the jaws into the opening. I like for the lid to be slightly dome or convex shaped. Sand through all the grits when you are satisfied with the shape.
4. Before removing the lid, lightly mark the center top with a pencil. Lightly draw a line across the top, through the center. Measure in 3/8" from the outside on each side of the lid and along the pencil line. Make a light mark. This will mark the outside diameter of the two holes to be drilled into the lid to accommodate the cord that will form the purse strap. You can now remove the lid from the chuck.

Drilling the holes

1. Examine the cord you have selected for the strap. You may choose a round woven leather strap, a satin twisted cord, or a round woven cord. The length of the cord should be about 50" but this measurement should reflect the height of the person who will carry the purse. The strap may need to be shorter or longer. You need the diameter of the cord in order to drill the holes in the purse.
2. Allow an extra 1/16" (1.5mm) when choosing a drill bit as you want the strap to move freely as the lid is opened and closed. Using your drill press, locate the marks you made on the lid and drill each of the two holes so that each will be 3/8" from the outside edge. The strap material should move freely through these holes.
3. Place the lid on the bottom of the purse and line up the grain. Stick a pencil into each of the two holes and make a mark on the shoulder of the purse bottom.
4. Remove the lid and drill the two holes into the lower section of the purse. Be sure that the drill bit does not come too close to the edge of the wood. Adjust its position as needed.
5. As an option, I like to turn little grommets to dress up the holes in the top of the lid. I often use a contrasting wood for the grommets and blackwood or ebony are my favorites. To turn the grommet, select a blank about 5/8" (16mm) square and mount the blank into small jaws. Use a spindle gouge to turn the blank round and to a diameter so that the grommets will overlap the holes by about 1/8" on each side. Drill a hole into the blank the same size as the holes in the purse.

6. Use your spindle gouge to round over the top and sides of the grommet Sand it as needed then use a thin parting tool to part it off. Use wood glue to attach the grommets to the lid.
7. At this point, you may choose to add enhancements such as pyrography, color, or carving. Or, you may choose to let the beauty of the wood speak for itself and apply the finish of your choice at this time. You will want to put finish on the inside of the lid and the shoulder of the bottom section.

For a finished look

1. You may certainly choose to leave the inside of the purse as it is—sanded and finished with the wood finish of your choice. However, there are two options for a more professional look. The simplest choice is to apply rayon flocking to the inside of the bottom section. Flocking is readily available on line and in a variety of colors. Follow the directions and apply the colored adhesive, then the flocking. I have used this method and the flocking does hold up fairly well.
2. To finish the purse with a flocked liner, run the strap cord through the top holes and the lower shoulder holes after flocking is completed. Tie a knot in the end of the cord and dab it with white glue so the knots do not come loose.
3. Another choice is to install a sewn liner. If you don't sew, a friend might sew this for you. Measure the inside circumference of the purse at its widest. Then measure the diameter across the bottom of the purse. Finally, measure the interior height from bottom to just under the shoulder. Add 1/2" (13mm) to all measurements.
4. On a piece of blank paper, lay out the measurements. You will have two pattern pieces—a rectangle and a circle.
5. Choose a complementary color of fabric in a material that does not fray to make a lining. Suede cloth is a good choice. Pin the pattern pieces onto the fabric and cut out the pieces.
6. With right sides together, sew the two ends of the rectangle together. You will need to cut 1/4" gashes or slits every half inch or so around one open end of the cylinder. Pin the circle to the open end of the cylinder (with the 1/4" cuts) placing right sides together. Stitch the two pieces together easing the cylinder to fit. Finally, turn under the top edge of the cylinder 1/4" and top stitch it.
7. Before installing the lining, run the strap through the lid and the bottom shoulder holes. Tie a secure knot into the end of the strap. Apply a bit of white glue to make sure the knot does not come loose.
8. To install the lining, stuff it into the purse and use a hot melt glue gun to attach the lining under the shoulder, covering the ends of the strap cord. The shoulder will hide both the top of the lining and the knotted cord.
9. Your beautiful purse is now complete.