

Tombstone Gun Grips

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Sanding, Polishing, and Filing Grips

The polyurethane resin used to make Tombstone Grips is quite strong (3,000 psi tensile strength) and heat resistant to over 350-degrees F. You can sand, file, saw, drill, carve, checker, scrimshaw, buff and polish the material to a high gloss. But generally, the ivory and most colored grips will look better if you just sand them smooth with 330 grit or 400 grit abrasive paper, wax them with a clear hard car wax or furniture wax, and buff the wax to a nice gloss.

Black grips can be made to look nicer after you have sanded and shaped them by brushing with an old toothbrush lightly tapped in black shoe polish (the wax kind that comes in a flat can). Brush them firmly to work the wax into the pores, and then if you have one, use a child's old hairbrush or a large medium-soft bristle brush to firmly buff the surface with quick, striking blows. This warms and drives the wax into the surface, and sets it up with a nice hard finish so it won't rub off on your hands.

Even though the color itself is mixed in the polymer liquid when the grips are poured, and is all the way through the material, when you sand and shape it, you change the surface light reflection so that the color may look different, usually lighter. By waxing and buffing the grip, you fill the tiny lines made by sanding and carving, and bring the light reflection back to an even level across the entire grip surface.

A fine buff can be made to pearl finished grips using white jeweler's polish on a muslin or cotton buffing wheel, spun at recommended speed in a power buffer. Even dried car wax which has a small amount of rubbing compound in it will act as a fine buffing medium. After buffing, a light wax coating brushed firmly into the pores and then buffed to a hard finish will improve the appearance.

To shape the grips, I use a coarse grit fingernail sanding stick and then a medium grit to finish it. These sticks are flat, a little larger than tongue depressors, and can be purchased at almost any cosmetics supply store or department store. The inside curve of single action grips is more easily and accurately shaped by wrapping a 150 to 220 grit piece of sanding cloth (not paper) around a 3/4 inch dowel, and using that like a fine file. The rounded surface conforms better to the inside curve. For the outside curve, a flat sanding stick works fine.

The thickness of grips is adjustable by gluing a piece of 150 grit abrasive cloth to a flat piece of wood, and then moving the grip firmly in circles over this surface, back side against it. Always remove material carefully and measure against the gun frequently, as making the grip thinner can also make it smaller across (for tapered cross sections). Contact cement works well to secure sandpaper to a flat board. Since most people want to adjust the thickness somewhat to suit their hand size, the thickness is usually left as large as it can be made for a particular mold, giving you plenty to work with. Sometimes one grip is a little thicker than the other, but this is easily adjusted or, in some cases, people find it to be desirable...the palm of the hand fits the right grip and the fingers wrap around the left one, different and non-symmetric matches to your hands!