

# Tombstone Gun Grips

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## **Blanks, spacers and generic grips**

Tombstone offers rectangular blocks, various shapes of grip blanks and spacers, and generic grips which are not fitted to any particular size of gun but can be sanded, filed, and cut smaller to fit a variety of roughly similar shapes of guns.

To turn a block or blank into a grip, first sand one side flat. This is the back of the grip. Make a drawing of the back of the grip on this flat surface. Use a coping saw to cut out the shape. Use a round file or dowel with sandpaper wrapped around it to sand the curve on the opposite side of the grip and shape it as desired. Generally, a grip will be thicker toward the bottom, except for thumb-rest style grips.

Once you have one grip panel made, use it as a template to mark the other block or blank, so you can carve the same thing but in reverse. Match the two panels, back to back, before drilling any holes.

Fit the grip to the gun frame from the top down. That is, match the top of the grip first and then mark the outline of the frame on the back of one panel. Sand the edges and bottom so that the grip fits the gun. You can finish the final sanding by putting cellophane tape on the gun frame, later, and mounting the grips on the gun, then sanding lightly until you just scruff the tape. Save that final amount until you have the mounting and alignment holes finished.

On most revolvers the mounting hole location isn't critical, so long as the screw clears the spring and hammer, and any fixed parts of the grip frame. Some revolvers have a very narrow range of possible location for the screw, so check it out carefully before making any holes in the grips. Examine the spring and hammer with the hammer cocked and with the hammer down, to make sure nothing moves into the path of your planned mounting screw location.

Tombstone offers standard No.2, No.4, and No.5 size mounting kits. Use the smallest kit that will work reasonably well, because it looks better. All of them are strong enough for any revolver. The No.4 is the most popular. Drill a flat bottom hole with a counterbore bit or make up a D-reamer to cut the hole for both the screw and the ferrule. Leave sufficient material under the bottom of the nut or ferrule so that you won't pull the mounting hardware right through the grip or break out the material as you tighten the screw.

Usually .025 to .030 inches is sufficient. On the nut side, try to mount the nut deep enough to allow for some slight protrusion of the screw tip without reaching the grip surface. On the ferrule side (screw head) the ferrule needs to be just flush or slightly below the surface. The screws are cut to length after the grip is completely finished, leaving one extra thread to sand with a light chamfer.

A sequence of progressively finer sandpaper and abrasive cloth can be used to remove the filing and shaping marks, and eventually to work down to as fine a finish as you choose. In general a 400 grit polish is sufficient for most opaque surfaces, while you may wish to go as fine as a 3000 grit polish on translucent pearl materials. Wet and dry auto-body finishing abrasives are good for this, as well as muslin buffing wheels and white jeweler's polish.

Spacers can be attached with 5-minute epoxy glue (clear, 3000 psi strength or higher, which is a standard conventional 2-part epoxy mix (hardner and resin in two tubes). This is a time-tested glue and should be used rather than experimenting with "better" kinds, which may in fact not work as well in this application. Always wear a face mask to filter out fine dust particles when sanding and shaping grips. Grip making is an art, but Tombstone blanks and generic forms make it easier, quicker and faster. You can scrimshaw, carve, checker and otherwise decorate the grips with less problem than most materials such as wood, ivory, or bone, due to the even structure and tensile strength of the polyurethane.