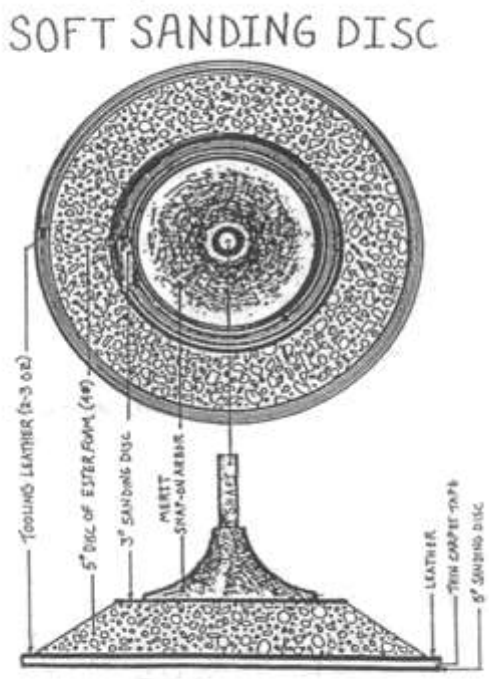
Shop Built Sanding Pads

When I first started turning in the early 8O's, I would spend as much time sanding as I would turning. I started sanding with a 7" body grinder and 36 grit sandpaper. In the intervening years I have gotten much better at turning, so that now I can start with 120 grit, occasionally 220 grit, But the greatest. change has been brought about by the sanding pads I developed. These pads are made from I" thick ester (type of) foam. The density of the foam is 4 lbs/cu-ft. Some 2-3 oz. leather and 'Snap-on' brand mandrels/sanding discs. Solvent (lacquer type) based contact is used for all gluing.

First cut a rough disc of foam about 5" in diameter, apply 2 coats of cement to both the foam and the sanding discs; then press together. Snap the assembly onto the mandrel and true up the outer edge of the foam by 'sanding' on a piece of coarse sandpaper fastened to your bench top. This will create clouds of rubber dust, but will true up the foam. The edge should be at about a 45 degree angle. The leather pad is cut round and 3/4" to I" larger in diameter than the foam. Again, 2 coats of cement are applied and the leather carefully centered on the foam. This completes the sanding pad.

I use thin cheap double sided carpet tape applied all across the leather to hold the sandpaper. Do not try to trim the carpet tape to the edge of the leather-instead, just whack it off and fold the excess over onto the pad. The tape is so thin it will not affect the sanding at all. Then plop the pad down onto the backside of your sandpaper. I use 'A' weight, open coat, sterate coated alum. oxide sandpaper. Then trim the paper flush with the edge of the leather with a utility knife.



I generally use 120, 220, and 320 grit paper The surface from 320 grit is comparable to 600 grit paper hand-applied to the wood. Then I power buff with a 6" muslin buffing wheel charged with either white diamond for lighter colored woods, or red rouge for darken A final buffing with a clean buffing wheel prepares the surface for a finish.

The pads work so well because the cut edge of the sandpaper is not held in contact with the surface of the wood. Rather, it 'floats' over the surface. The edge of the paper (and any folds or tears) is what causes the semi-circular scratches, but the floating action eliminates these scratches. Also, the softness of the foam and the tapered edge allows the pads to conform to concave surfaces with gouging.

Sanding is done on the lathe but with the lathe off. The reason is to eliminate over-sanding Imagine that you are power sanding with the lathe on, Upon examination of the surface you find that 80% of it is Ok, but a couple of spots remain rough If you turn on the lathe, you are now sanding 100% of the surface just to take care of 2O% of it. This is over-sanding, and is a waste of sandpaper, time and energy. Much better to sand until the surface in that area is done, then move on

James Johnson, 2007