

Selecting A Carving Axe

It's easy as a beginning carver to get stuck trying to decide on what axe to buy. There are a great many axes to choose from and you could easily spend hundreds of dollars on an axe when all you need to spend is about twenty five. This guide will show you the most important features to look for when shopping for an axe for carving. I've listed them in the order I find most important. Others may disagree with me.

1. Steel quality. This is difficult to gauge by eye so buy a trusted brand, either new or vintage.

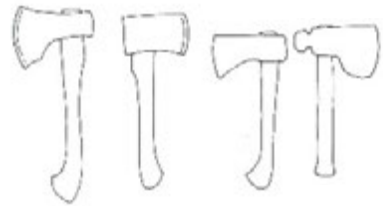
2. Weight. Usually under 2 pounds.

4. Bevel grind. 25 to 30 degree bevel grind is good for carving. There is always a tradeoff between how fragile the edge is and how easily it cuts.

5. Edge shape. Many people like a long, curved bit in order to take advantage of slicing cuts. While helpful, this isn't strictly necessary as most people use the axe for rough work.

3. Handle length and shape. Usually between 10 and 15 inches. Too long and it gets awkward. You want it thin enough to grip easily. The nice thing about carving is, if you don't like the handle, carve another.

6. Head shape. Some people like a cut out behind the bit to put their hand close for detail work. Again, not strictly necessary. All the axes below will work given the above criteria.



7. Bevel type. Sometimes an axe is ground flat on one side. So the flat side of the axe is against the wood. This is called an asymmetrical grind. They come right or left handed. I tend to recommend getting a grind that is symmetrical, but if you want an asymmetrical grind, get one where the flat side is against the wood.

