

Troubleshooting Tips for Scroll Saw Use

Wondering what went wrong as you put your scroll saw to use? Scroll saw expert Carole Rothman shares these troubleshooting tips for common situations you might encounter. -WJ Editor

1. Problem: Blade breaks. *Possible causes:* blade may be over-tensioned; if the blade breaks at the holder, it may be clamped too tightly; blade may be dull.

Solution: Reduce blade tension; tighten clamps just until they hold the blade firmly; change the blade.

2. Problem: Blade does not follow the line. *Possible causes:* blade may be under-tensioned; blade may be dull; the scroller may be pushing the blade through the wood.

Solution: Increase blade tension; change the blade; allow the blade to cut at its own pace.

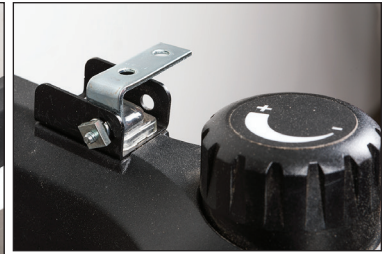
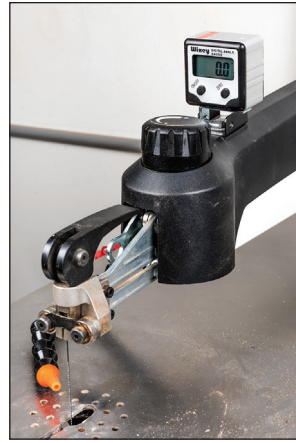
3. Problem: Cuts are not perpendicular. *Possible causes:* blade may not be square to the table; the scroller may be pushing the blade sideways; the blade may be under-tensioned.

Solution: Check the blade and table for square; let the blade do the cutting without forcing; increase blade tension.

4. Problem: Blade is difficult to control when cutting thin wood. *Possible causes:* blade speed, feed rate, or both may be too fast.

Solution: Lower speed setting; feed the wood more slowly.

It's easy to lose control when cutting thin wood. If you find yourself veering off the line, reduce the blade speed and ease off on your feed rate. When you gain proficiency, you can speed things up again.



Scroll saw angle gauges, located below the saw table, are awkward to read and inadequate when accuracy is important. A digital readout is more precise. It can be used with all types of scroll saws, placed either on a tilting table or saw blade, or attached to a tilting arm.



There's no substitute for practice when learning how to control the saw blade. Whether you use a prepared practice sheet or draw your own, you'll be amazed at how rapidly you progress.



5. Problem: Excess burning when cutting thick or dense wood. *Possible causes:* wrong size or type of blade for thickness or type of wood.

Solution: Use painter's blue tape or clear packing tape on the wood for lubrication; use a larger blade or one designed for the thick or hard wood.

6. Problem: Workpiece bounces excessively.

Possible causes: underside of workpiece is rough or uneven; blade is inserted upside down.

Solution: Sand the underside of the workpiece so that it sits flat on the saw table; insert the blade in the correct orientation. Some blades are marked or crimped at the top to ensure correct insertion.



Applying tape to the workpiece provides lubrication for the blade and makes it easier to cut wood that is hard, dense or burns easily, like cherry. Blue painter's or clear packing tapes are popular choices.