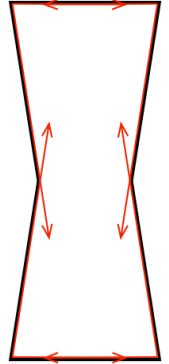


The Wood Surgeon's Tips for Inlaying Wood Bow Ties

Start by choosing or making a bowtie with corner angles that are not too tight: acute corners are hard to chisel out. Make sure the waist of the bowtie is not narrower than your router bit or smallest chisel.

Number your bowties and the piece into which they will be inlayed so you can maintain orientation. No two bow ties are exactly the same size or shape. The number will also help prevent you from sanding the bevel on the wrong side. Simply hold the bowtie down with your fingers and mark the outline with a sharp pencil. Hold the pencil at 45 degrees. For dark woods, put painter's tape over the area where you want to inlay your bowtie. Painter's tape also helps preventing the blade from tracking the grain if you're having difficulty with this. No need to glue or double side tape the bowtie to your piece to mark it.

Using a new blade in a utility knife, cut a score on the inside edge of the outline mark — not inside of the outline.



Take your time

Start from the corners

On the ends, stop before the other corner so you don't past point

Past pointing he corners is very noticeable and requires a lot of sanding to remove

On the sides, score past the waist and into the middle of inlay

First pass should be done with very light pressure to maximize accuracy

Repeat passes adding pressure until you have a score that is about 75% (1/16") of the width of the bevel on your blade.

Set your router bit to the desired depth, I like to leave my inlays a little bit proud, approximately 1/32" to 1/16". The reason is so any scratches or rough spots on the inlay will be removed with sanding.

Roughly sketch a guideline 1/4" inside of your score line. This will be your guide to hogging out the center of the inlay. The less material you hog out, the more precise control you have with router. Using your depth set stop turret, sequentially hog out the mortise for your inlay. Once you have hogged out the center to the final depth, you'll then slowly sneak up to the knife score line taking small passes. I prefer to go counter clockwise. If the bit bites aggressively, it will run to the middle rather than bite into the edge. Take notice of the sound your router makes depending on the amount of material your are removing. This will help you to take small amounts when you doing your final pass. I get as close as I can to the score line without actually trying to remove it. Ideally, the chip will separate at the score line.

When chiseling, start at the waist and move towards the corners. Don't use the edge as a fulcrum, that will push the edge outwards leaving a gap. Use a 1/4" chisel for the corners and take your time removing small pieces. Make sure the sides of the mortise are vertical or undercut. If the bottom of the mortise is narrower than the top, the inlay will not completely seat leaving a gap at the edge. The strength of the inlay comes from the glued bottom surface more so than the mechanical advantage of the tapered shape.

My preference is to use epoxy for my inlays. I use a little spatula to squeegee the glue and fill any voids. If you use regular glue and there is a gap, I sand when the glue is almost dry allowing the sawdust to stick to the glue and may fill any gaps. If after inlaying the bow tie you have gaps and before the glue dries, you can use an iron to steam the wood causing it to swell minimizing the gap.

For ebony, rosewood, and other high oil content woods clean with acetone and glue only with epoxy. If you don't want to make your own bow ties or are looking for an exotic wood to dress up your piece, visit my shop on Etsy at [woodsurgeshop](https://www.etsy.com/shop/woodsurgeshop). If you have any of your own tips, please forward them to me. Click below for a downloadable pdf version of this and to watch my video tutorial on YouTube.

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Thanks,

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