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How to sharpen a splitting wedge

In a Hurry? Here's Our Top Choice: Estwing Sure Split WedgeThe Estwing Sure Split Wedge is a traditionally shaped forged steel wedge that does one main task -- get the job done. Axe & Answered may receive some form of compensation from the links on this page, at no extra charge to you. Learn more.Many people have a rustic notion of hoisting a mighty ax on their shoulder like Paul Bunyan and cleaving straight through a raw hunk of cut timber. It's a fantastic image and makes us all feel like mighty, flannel-wearing outdoorsmen. But the reality is it's not the most efficient or useful way to split timber into perfect hunks of firewood. To do it right the first time, you need a quality split wedge and a heavy sledge to hammer it home. If you've used one before, you already know that not all splitting wedges are created equal. Some only split halves while others quarter your wood stock into ready pieces of firewood or kindling, and many have other exciting features that make them more useful than others. In this article, we'll take you through a few of the best splitting wedges available on the market today, detailing a few of their more exceptional features. To get the most out of your wood stock, however, you may need to try out a few different designs. *Links on the above comparison chart take you to individual product pages on Amazon.com While getting genuinely excited about something that is essentially a hunk of metal seems a little strange to most people, there's a lot to be happy about with the Estwing Sure Split Wedge. Dimensions: 8.9 x 2.5 x 1.8 inchesWeight: 5 lbsLength: 8 inchesMaterial: steel It's a hefty piece of steel construction, weighing in at 5 lbs, which gives it enough weight that it's unlikely to shift much once driven in. It also contains an isocore to help absorb the shock of a strike, so you don't get as much recoil every time. The hand-sharpened and tapered cutting head almost guarantees a pain-free start as you tap it in, helping you limit the possibility of it shifting before your strike. Once properly seated, you're ready to hammer it home where the sharpened cutting head opens up to the full angled wedge. But the truly exceptional part of the Estwing Sure Split is the wings on either side of the striking head which clear the wood away from the striking surface even after it drops below the wood line. No matter how seasoned your wood is, you're almost guaranteed a clean strike and a much easier time splitting. But take care of the steel construction as it can curl, sending off steel splinters if you don't strike true. Isocore shock system won't transfer as much recoil into your body.Fast tapered and hand-sharpened cutting head gives a smooth, easy start.Fin features push the wood apart, leaving access for a sledgehammer after you go below the wood line.Soft steel isn't as robust as other materials and can shed metal splinters. The Collins Wood Splitting Wedge is a diamond-shaped wedge, also commonly known as a "grenade" because of how efficient it is at breaking apart logs. Dimensions: 7x3x3 inchesWeight: 4 lbsLength: 7 InchesMaterial: Heat treated carbon steelPointed head If you don't have a diamond-shaped wedge like the Collins in your wood splitting arsenal, you are missing out. Unlike standard wedges, this breaks logs into nice quarter rounds, perfect for the fireplace. The Collins is made from 7 inches of solid heat-treated carbon steel with an insulation sleeve to help absorb the shock of impact, so it doesn't travel into your hands and arms. It has a sharp point, and a nice broad striking head. Furthermore, its fins are lined with teeth to help prevent it from shifting after the first strike. Unfortunately, the teeth don't always bite the log quite as securely as necessary, so some shifting is possible. The Collins wedge is perfect for getting smaller kindling or quarter rounds out of your wood stock, which is the mainstay of any respectable winter fuel supply. But be careful with the pointed edge as it can bend if you haven't adequately started the wedge and then struck too hard.Diamond point wedges also tend to get buried in logs if you're not careful, but usually not to the point of being unretrievablethis is due to their unique design. Make sure your stock is well seasoned, and you shouldn't need to worry about losing your wedge. Easily splits logs into quarters.High carbon steel means durable and robust construction.Sharp pointed end makes it easy to start into a log.Insulation sleeve helps absorb the impact of the blow.Teeth help the wedge keep purchase inside the log without shifting.The pointed head can bend if struck too hard or not started properly.Sometimes shifts despite the teeth. If you're looking for something simple with a classic design that gets the job done, the True Temper Wood-Splitting Wedge makes a quality wedge with few extra features other than a sharp cutting head. Dimensions: 5.2 x 2.5 x 1.8 inchesWeight: 4.15 lbsLength: 5.2 inchesMaterial: drop forged, heat-treated steel At 5.2 lbs, it's one of the more substantial wedges on our list, and it's also one of the sharpest out of the ones that use a simple wedge design. Aside from the super-durable quality made from heat-treated, drop-forged steel, there aren't many "features" to this wedge. It has a square head tapering to a sharp point and no fins, so you may find it gets buried in logs. Fortunately, it's easy to extract if you flip the wood over and let gravity do its work with a few strikes on the other side. Despite its no-frills approach, the True Temper Wood Splitting Wedge gets the job done, taking on even dense, seasoned hardwoods like walnut with ease. Sometimes, the most straightforward designs are the best. These wedges are made in America and come in single, double, or four-packs. The cutting edge is very sharp, so it cuts easily.Works great on hard seasoned wood.Classic, simple, and durable design.Easy to lose the wedge below the wood line. Small logs and even some small to medium sized logs and stumps can usually be split easily enough with a basic splitting axe, especially if they are a soft wood, like pine and fir. But, when you are working with hardwoods and larger logs and stumps, you might want to upgrade your splitting tools. You could of course opt for a heavy maul, like one with an 8+ pound head. The heavy head really allows for a strong downswing and should be able to split most logs in its path, even if it take a couple tries. Just keep in mind, every downswing requires you to lift that bad boy over your head. It's easy to wear yourself down quickly.When you know you will be working with very large stumps, skipping the smaller axes and jumping right into a wedge is a solid decision. You'll be able to work at a much more efficient pace, and you won't risk breaking the handle of your axe. Breaking a handle is not only a pain in the butt, it's actually quite dangerous as you don't know where the axe head will fly.Not all wedges are the same. Just like any other tool, the quality of the manufacturing varies greatly from brand to brand, and even from model to model. Some designs look like your basic wedge shape, think like a brick of cheese, that split logs in half. Other more advanced designs, like the 4 way log splitting wedge design, are made to completely fracture logs into multiple pieces with a single blow. Aside from the shape of the wedge, you should look into the material it's made of. The better the steel and design, the more durable the wedge. A great way to know how long it will last and how well it will do its job is by reading reviews of those who have hands-on experience with the model you're interested in.An often overlooked an unthought of part of driving steel into large logs and hardwoods is that you generate a lot of force. Eventually the metal is going to bend or warp. By opting for using a sledge or the poll of your maul with a wedge instead of just the bit of an axe or maul, you greatly sustain the lifespan of your axe or maul. And, while having to purchase another tool in order to sustain another may seem pointless, wedges are typically much less costly than a quality maul.Aside from sustaining the lifespan of your maul, there's another benefit to using a log splitter wedge when working on larger logs and hardwoods. When you know it's going to take a little extra power to drive metal through wood, it's easy to lose accuracy on your swing. That can lead to missing your target.When you use a wedge, you first place it in an existing crack. Or, if you need to you can hammer it in a bit like you would when setting a nail. That gives you a nice big target to aim for with your sledge or maul. Plus, by using a wedge with the poll of your maul instead of the bit, if you miss your target you're much less likely to seriously injure yourself. And, just in case you aren't sure if they work as advertised, here's a video of a self proclaimed beginner as using them making one from a piece of wood and using it to effectively split a medium-sized log. If he can do that with a piece of wood, imagine what you can do with a piece of steel. You don't absolutely have to use a wedge while splitting wood, but if you are going to be doing a lot of work, there's no reason not too. They won't break the bank, and over the long term they will probably save you money. Besides saving you money, they can really speed up your work thus saving you time. And, they tend to be safer than using only an axe.If you know you'll be working on large stumps and logs or with especially touch hardwood, do yourself a favor and get a quality splitting wedge. Your wallet, hands, and maybe even your legs, will thank you. I love hand-splitting my own firewood but then again, I also love working out. I get to do both when I engage in this activity. I have found over the years that the best tool for the job, the one that will give me a good workout but not pushes me to the point of torture, is a splitting maul. Most woodmen, and of course the occasional firewood cutter, know a thing or two about this long & sharp tool that can cut the trunk of a tree into tiny pieces of wood. Yet at the same time, many of them do not know the proper way to sharpen the head of a splitting maul so that it has a real sharp edge to it - so that it cuts like Thor's Stormbreaker and not a butter knife! Do you want to know how to do this? I would expect so as you are still reading. Anyway, the edge of the maul should not be dull or dinged as this is going to make it very hard for you to cut a complete face cord (i.e. a pile of wood 4 feet high & 8 feet long) or a decent amount of wood for your fireplace, whichever the case may be. There are many ways woodsman sharpen their maul, but for the sake of brevity, I am going to give you the easiest one, at least in my humble opinion, and then some other ones just so you have a few more tricks up your sleeve in case you need them. First, let's take a look at what you are going to need to sharpen your splitting maul the right way. Sharpening Tools (What You Will Need) In the upcoming section, I will outline when, where, and how to use each of the following tools. For now, let me just list them out so you will know what you need before starting your maul sharpening process. The Easy Method That's right, I said Bastard - that is actually what it is called. There are many kinds of Bastard Files - many shapes, many sizes, with handle & without - but I recommend that you use a 12-inch one as it is the right size for a maul (easiest to use for sharpening it) and can be used for your other sharpening needs no matter the tool or its size. A 12-inch Bastard File is kind of an all-purpose file and will be able to sharpen most of your tools with relative ease. How to Sharpen an Axe or Splitting Maul: The Middle Method The middle method requires two sharpening tools. The first one to grind the edge of the maul and the second one to remove any rough edges due to the grinding (detailed directions will be given in the next section). The Exhaustive Method The exhaustive method of sharpening a maul is just that - exhaustive! It is a bit overboard but it will get your maul so sharp that it will not only cut through Oak and fine enough to split a fine hair that has fallen off your head! *** Also, it goes without saying but let me say it any way that you should use safety glasses and protective work gloves when engaging in any cutting job. As the saying goes, "Better safe than sorry!". 3 Methods For Sharpening Your Splitting Maul Let's get down to the nitty gritty, shall we? The Easy Method Step 1 Lie your splitting maul on a low bench or stool (if you are seated) or table (if you are standing) so that the maul itself is lying sideways, sharp edge facing to the right side away from your body. Step 2 Rub the Bastard File across the edge of the maul in an upward fashion - up but not straight up, angled slightly away from you. Make sure you use fluid strokes and go all the way across while filing. Start from the closest edge and run the file across to the edge furthest away from you. Step 3 Turn the maul over and repeat the process on the other side. How To Sharpen Your Splitting Maul / Axe Maul: This is definitely the simplest method out of the 3 mentioned here in that it requires only one tool to perform the job and really only one movement. Easy, however, does not mean ineffective. It should give your maul edge the sharpness it needs to split your firewood. The Middle Method Step 1 First, set up & install your angle grinder disc. Step 2 Lock down the grinder with C-clamp to a metal table. Install angle grinder disc. | Angle grinder safety: Step 3 Start the grinder and bring the edge of the maul against the disc wheel. It will only take about 10 seconds max to sharpen the edge. Step 4 Now repeat the process on the other side. Fast Way to Sharpen & Maintain an Axe & Maul. *** Be sure to wear a protective shield as the grinder and maul will spit off sparks. *** This process should only take you 1 or 2 minutes. Don't use the grinder method too much because it really takes off the steel. Some people may object to not using a bench but if you clamp it the way the video below shows, you should be OK. It's quick and fast but too much use and you will thin your edge to almost nothing. Step 5 If the edge of the maul is dull or damaged use the dark side portion of the hand stone. If the edge is in okay condition, use the lighter side of the puck for sharpening your maul. Step 6 Add water to the hand stone before sharpening. Step 7 With your left hand, grasp the maul across the blade so that the edge is pointing up (handle facing your body). Step 8 Use small circular clockwise motions along the edge to smooth out any roughness caused by the grinding. Count how many circular motions you use. Step 9 Repeat the same process (switch hand placements - right hand holds maul & left hand holds puck) on the other side for the same number of times. Continue this process on both sides of the maul until the edge is as sharp as you want it. How to Field Sharpen an Axe or Hatchet with a Puck Sharpening Stone: The Exhaustive Method Step 1 Follow the Easy Method listed above. Step 2 Follow steps 5, 6, 7, 8, & 9 in the Middle Method listed above. Step 3 Grab your honing steel to further smooth out any rough edges as well as revive the blade (i.e. make it even sharper). The process is similar to that of sharpening a knife with a honing steel only this time you will be holding a splitting maul instead. Hold the head of the maul with the edge facing down and push forward & downward against the honing steel (like carving a piece of wood - maul and honing steel tips both pointing away from your body). The starting position should be as such: bottom of the maul edge at the base of the honing steel and finishes with top of the maul edge at the tip of the honing steel. Do this about 6-8 times and then repeat the process on the other side. Continue until you are satisfied with the results. Conclusion Now you know how to sharpen a maul! Well, you may have already known of one way but now you have various tools and methods from which to keep your maul sharp and smooth for your wood splitting and cutting jobs. Not only does having a sharp maul make cutting wood easier it also extends the life of the maul as with dull mauls you will have to chop harder to create a decent cut. More frequent and harder equals less lifespan! If you have any comments, suggestions, or questions feel free to leave it below in the comments section. Also, if you enjoyed this mini maul-sharpening tutorial and got some value from it, please share it with others, preferably those who appreciate fresh-cut firewood as much as you and I do. how to sharpen a wedge. how to sharpen wedge grooves

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