

Not Ready for Prime Time



I was pleased when my new set of Marples chisels got here just a couple of days after I ordered them, but when I tried to use them they didn't work worth a rip! Am I doing something wrong I don't know about? What gives?



The only problem with your chisels is that they're new, and they've never been sharpened. In fact, if you try to use one of your chisels right out of the pouch, you might end up breaking it if you try to force it to work.

We usually expect things that are new to be in their best condition, but that's rarely true of woodworking tools. Or many other things, when you get down to it; when's the last time you bought a cell phone that already knew all your speed dial numbers? There are few woodworking tools that claim to be sharp enough to use as delivered, and fewer yet that actually are.

While it might seem appropriate for tools to be sharpened by their makers, there are some valid reasons for the current state of affairs. From a practical view, how much more would you really be willing to pay to skip just one of the hundreds of sharpenings you'll do throughout the life of a tool? From a craftsman's view, why pay a factory to do something you can do better? Even if they did it well (and that's a big if), what's the chance a sharp edge would get all the way to you without suffering a nick or two, requiring resharpener anyway?

From the tool's view, you're the first person it has ever met who actually needs it to cut wood, so you're the one who gets to make it ready and show it how.

Your Marples chisels are excellent tools. They're tough, comfortable, remarkably affordable, and capable of doing your finest work. Give them a sharp edge now and every time they need it, and they'll reward you handsomely for decades to come.