Making a Horizontal Round Mold

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The International Association of Penturners
Making a Horizontal Round Mold.

You will need just a few items, most of which can be scavenged or created!

The only thing you should need to buy is the silicone.

Supply list:
1 tube of ACETIC CURE silicone. The Acetic cure part is VITAL! If it is not acetic cure silicone, it will never fully cure and will be nothing but a mess.

You will also need something to hold your mold in while it cures. A mold for the mold if you will. This can be a box that is made by you, or something scavenged. I use a fishing lure tackle box sectioned off to the proper length. You could shorten it and make Sierra length blanks if you wanted to, or make it longer for kitless or closed end blanks!

You will need a LARGE bowl of water with some dish soap in it. Not sudsy, but just soapy. This is to start the curing process in the silicone. It also makes it workable with your hands.

And finally you will need the "void maker". This is the item that is used to create the temporary void in the hole that you will fill with resin to make the blank. You can use a square piece I am sure, but I prefer round blanks, they are easier to drill on the lathe, and it is less waste, so I use a cylindrical piece to create the void. Just about anything can be used for this job. You just want it to be smooth, non porous, and the correct size. I use pen blanks that I made with PVC pipe. You could use a length of metal rod, or wax candle, or just about anything that has the correct dimensions and meets the other requirements. You could even turn a piece of wood. Just sand it down and apply a finish just like it was going to be a finished project. That will insure that the silicone releases when the time comes.

Now, LET'S GET MESSY!!!!!!!

First things first, get all your supplies ready to go. This process takes just a couple of minutes so you don't want to be hopping around the shop looking for an ingredient!

WARNING: This silicone will be very deceiving. When your hands are wet with soapy water, it will feel like it has a skin on it, and it will not stick to your skin. If you even get near the silicone with a bit of dry skin, you will quickly realize that there is no skin on the silicone, and it will goop you up instantly!
Now, squirt the contents of the silicone into the soapy water. Get your hands wet with the soapy water before you touch any silicone. Once your hands are wet, start kneading the silicone gently while holding it submerged in the water. After just a minute or two, you will start to feel a change in the consistency of the silicone. It will start to thicken up. The reaction has started! Time to get this thing made!

Separate a workable wad of silicone, under water the whole time. Roll it gently into a big fat roll and plop it down in the mold box. Use your fingers to press it down in, pushing all the water and air out.

Keep doing this until the mold box is full.
Now wet your "void maker", and slowly and carefully press it down into the center of your silicone. Once it is deep enough, press the silicone together to cover the "void maker" completely. You only want a 1/4" or so over the top of the "void maker". This measurement is not crucial. Smooth over the top for aesthetics, and you are done for today! Go make a pen!

24 Hours later.......  

Now that your silicone mold has had time to cure, pull it out of the mold box. If you built a mold box, you may have to take it apart.

Use a razor or very sharp knife and CAREFULLY cut a slit the length of the "void maker". (You can feel where the ends are by pressing on the top of the mold.)
Once you have cut through the silicone all the way down, carefully pull the "void maker" out.

Now use some sharp scissors or knife or something and CAREFULLY trim a little bit of material off down each side of the incision.

On one end, make a small cut to the outside edges of the void. This will allow you to have an end to pop the new blanks out of without damaging the mold itself.

Now you are ready to cast a Horizontal round blank! Thanks for reading my tutorial.