

# How to use the Reed / Slot Burnishing Tool

The second definition of the word burnish in the Webster's dictionary is: to rub (a material) with a tool for compacting or smoothing or for turning an edge. That is what the Reed / Slot Burnishing Tool does brilliantly - turns down the edge of a slot to bring it closer to the reed, and turns down the edge of the reed near the rivet pad to bring it closer to the reed plate.

To use this tool, you must have backlighting through the slot so you can see what you are doing as you work. If you do this "blind" you will not catch over-burnishing until it is too late.

Please check out the videos at [HotRodHarmonicas.com](http://HotRodHarmonicas.com) in the Post "Draw Scraper & Reed / Slot Burnishing Tool". When you watch the video after reading these instructions you will have a basic understanding of how to use this tool. Practice with light pressure on some scrap reed plates and then on some harps you intend to use. Reed plate metals vary considerably in terms of hardness, so always start out with very light pressure till you get a feel for what works. It's much easier to work the edge of the slot gradually toward the reed than it is to go too far and then have to scrape back a ridge that is in the way of the reed.

When you hold the tool nearly straight up and down like a pencil, you can close the end of the slot easily once you find the correct angle. It just takes a bit of experimenting. You do not want to push the reed down when you are closing the end of the slot. It is a good idea to put the reed support tool under the tip of the reed ( or a shim ) to keep the reed up. The tool is guided by LIGHT pressure against the reed. Start with very light downward pressure on the edge of the slot. When you get this right, it only takes a very small amount of pressure.

Then you use the tool at a shallower angle to burnish the rest of the one side of the slot wall. At this point the tool is over the reed and slot and you are pushing the reed into the slot as you work. You can also turn the blade as you work to use the broader flatter part of the tool or use it closer to the edge to make the area of contact smaller. Plink the reed frequently to make sure you are not getting too close and check reed / slot clearance by watching as you push the reed in the slot so you can see the point where the reed is at the same level as the slot walls.

Some mineral oil or a mixture of mineral oil and beeswax on the tool keeps it lubricated as you work. Once in a while it is a good idea to polish the tool with some kind of soft cloth and polishing compound to restore the smooth surface.

This tool allows you to close up slots to any degree you want to, from light burnishing on part of the slots to tight closure the entire length of the slot.

The second way you can use this tool is to push the reed down at the end of the slot where the reed is attached. This is one of the ways to get maximum compression and high performance from a reed. The closer you get to the end of the slot the more careful you need to be. If you go too far, you can use the stainless steel reed shaper tool to bring the reed back up.

If you want to see detailed examples of reed shaping and burnishing using back lighting to guide your work, my video series "Hot Rod Your Harmonica, The Movie", (available at the store at [HotRodHarmonicas.com](http://HotRodHarmonicas.com)) has very detailed close up shots of me doing this work. The tools are somewhat different, but the principles are exactly the same. The videos I referred to earlier go over the main ideas, and may be enough to get you going, but the videos in the store go into much greater detail and also get into tuning, repair, and much more...

## The Draw Scraper

The draw scraper works when you pull the blade toward you. It is ideal for removing brass near the end of the reed next to the rivet pad to drop the pitch of the reed. You can reach inside the comb of a fully assembled harmonica to drop the pitch of the blow reeds, but you will need to practice to do this well, because you are working by feel only, you can't really see what you are doing.

The edge is razor sharp and should hold up for a long time, but you can touch it up by drawing it toward you on a hard Arkansas stone or super fine diamond stone at about a 20 degree angle. If you know how to sharpen a knife on a sharpening stone, it is the same basic process. The extra width of the new draw scraper makes it much easier to sharpen than the older narrow version of this tool.

You can find more videos at the Hot Rod Harmonica website that show the reed shaper tool, the reed wrench / reed support tool and other ideas and DIY tools like light boxes...

Enjoy the process and contact me if you have any questions!

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