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HOW TO



# Polish Aluminum Spinners

**Bringing out the shine is easy**

**by Rick Bell**

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Like many modelers, I want to have a sharp-looking plane that stands out on the flightline. One detail that can really grab attention is a highly polished metal spinner that gleams and glints on a bright sunny day. Most metal spinners are made of turned aluminum that isn't shiny. Although they have a nice shape, these spinners just don't have the chrome-plated look that could set them apart from the crowd.

Polishing an aluminum spinner to bring out that shine isn't difficult. In fact, it,s pretty easy and requires just a few, easy-to-find supplies. The most important item needed for this project is elbow grease-something that modelers have a lot of! For this article, I used a Tru-Turn 2 1/2-inch-diameter aluminum spinner that saw a lot of flying last year. Why not follow along and learn how to add a touch of class to your airborne pride and joy?

## 1 Here's all you need to bring out the shine in aluminum:

**sandpaper in several grits , metal polish, a Dremel tool and "elbow grease."**

Although there are various ways to polish metal, the best way to polish turned aluminum is to sand the spinner with successively finer grits of wet-and-dry sandpaper used wet. You'll need sheets of 240-, 400-, 600- and 1,000-grit sandpaper; you can find them at any hardware store. To bring out the shine, you'll need a cream-based polishing compound and a Dremel Moto-Tool with a large, felt polishing wheel. I use Blue Magic metal polish; it's available at auto-parts stores. Just about any metal polish will do, so you don't need to buy an expensive brand; the cheap stuff works just fine.

One note of caution here: don't mount the spinner in a lathe, a drill press, or a hand drill to rotate the spinner. Those power tools would turn the spinner so fast that you could damage it or injure yourself.

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## 2 Before you start, secure the backplate to the spinner with a nut and bolt. This will prevent the mating surfaces of the spinner from being rounded off by the sanding.

Fasten the backplate to the spinner. Insert a long bolt through the spinner's nose and securely tighten a nut and washer to the rear of the backplate. It's best to grind down the bolt's head (if necessary) so it fits completely inside the recess. If you use an extra-long bolt, you'll have a convenient handle to hold the spinner.

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**3** **Top: Start by sanding the spinner from its nose to back at 90 degrees to the tiny, machined-in radial grooves. Remember to keep the sandpaper wet.**

**Bottom Left: The spinner has been partially sanded with 240-grit sandpaper; you can really see the difference between the sanded and unsanded sections.**

**Bottom Right: This is the spinner after the machining marks have been sanded out.**

Start by sanding with the 240-grit sandpaper used wet. If you look closely at the spinner, you should see tiny radial grooves that encircle the spinner. The cutting tool that machines the spinner to shape creates these grooves. The grooves are similar to those on an old 33rpm record. The best way to remove them is to sand at 90 degrees across them-not parallel to them.

With a stroking motion and moderate pressure, manually sand the spinner from its nose to the backplate. Make sure that the sandpaper is wet at all times, or it will "load up" with aluminum powder that will scratch the spinner. Your goal in this step is to smooth out the machining tool's marks. As you sand, the spinner will develop a satin finish; uneven areas that need further sanding and sections that you may have missed will be obvious. When you've sanded out all of the tool marks, it's time to switch to finer, 400-grit sandpaper.

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