Bell Ornament

Many turners would like to make an ornament but don't have the confidence or skills to hollow a globe. Fortunately, not all ornaments have to have a globe! Turners can create this Bell ornament without having to do any difficult hollowing.

I've prepared this handout to show how I make this ornament. You may decide to use a different process or create a different size bell. You can choose any kind of wood, but I think the handle and body should be contrasting colors. I typically use maple for the handle and either cherry or Bradford pear for the body.

Materials Needed

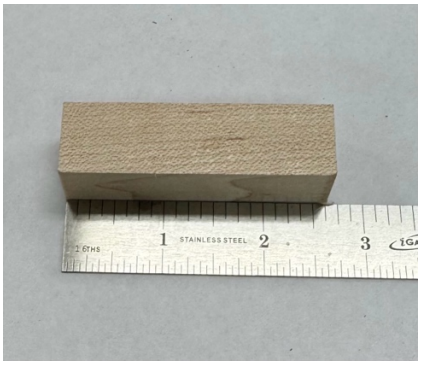
To make this ornament, you need 5 things:

1. Wooden blank for the body.
2. Wooden blank for the handle.
3. Screw eye for the hanger.
4. Bell for the bell clanger.
5. Wire to connect clanger to the bell.

The blank for the bell body should be 2 ½" square x 2 ¾" long.

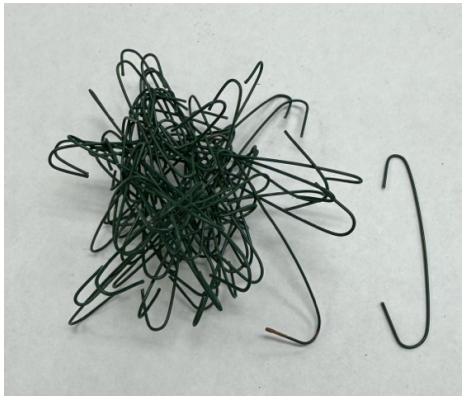
The finished body will be 2 ¼" wide at the bottom diameter and 2" tall.

The blank for the handle should be ¾" square x 2 5/8" long. This length allows you to include a ¼" long tenon.



The finished handle will be 11/16" diameter at its biggest point and 2 3/8" tall showing as you see it on the bell. (It also has a 3/8" diameter tenon approximately ¼" long.)

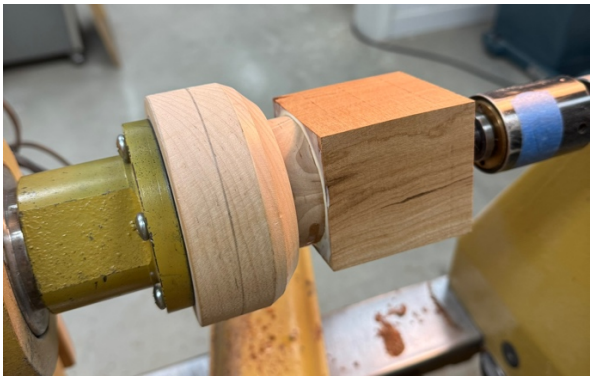
You will also need a little bell which you can but in craft stores, a little screw eye which you can buy on Amazon and an ornament hanger or small wire.



Steps to Complete the Bell

Mark the center on the end of the body blank with a punch and mount the body blank on the lathe. I like to use a glue block for this step, and I like to use Titebond glue. You can use the tail stock as a clamp to hold the block in place.

The bottom of the bell is facing towards the tail stock.



Turn the blank round to 2 ¼” D and drill a 3/8” hole at least 2 3/8” deep. You want the hole to go through the top of the bell but not into the glue block. (See the next panel for measuring instructions.)

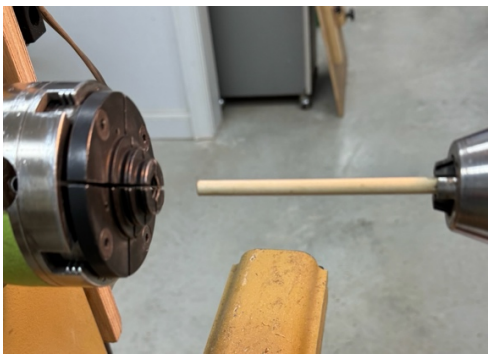
Square the outside edge of the blank and use a pencil to mark 2” from the end. This will be the top of the bell.

Note: When measuring the depth of the hole, measure from the wide end of the drill bit shank. Do not measure from the drill bit tip.

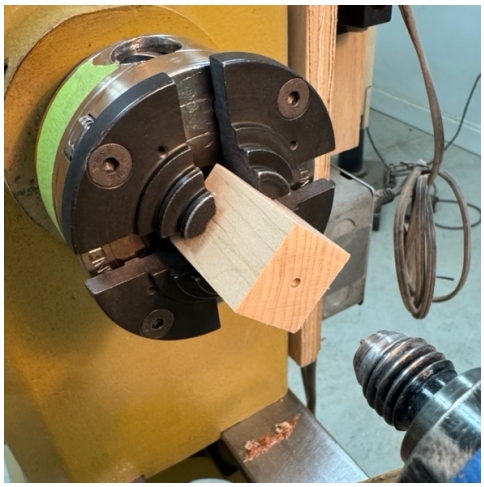
Bring the tail stock up for support and shape the outside of the body. (Shape about 2/3 of the bank.). Then turn a chamfer on the bottom edge of the blank. You can how hollow the body. See the next panel for hollowing alternatives.

You can use various tools to hollow the body. The first is a spindle gouge. Using a spindle gouge, you start at the center and pull the tool towards the side. If you want to limit the amount of hollowing, you can use a large drill bit to remove most of the mass. If you want to clean up the inside of the top, you can use a round over router bit. A ¾" drill bit or ¾" round over bit is ideal for this project.

When you finish the hollowing process, you can sand and apply a finish to the inside of the body if you want. Finish turning the outside of the body and part off from the lathe. To keep the body from falling on the floor, I mount a ¼" dowel in a drill chuck and place it in the hole in the body. When the body is parted off it stays on the dowel.



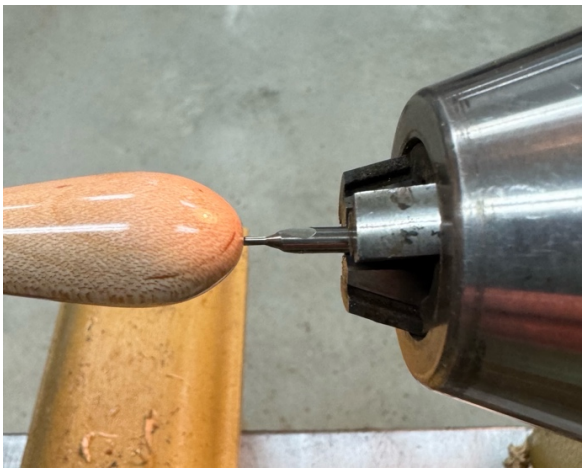
To turn the handle, mount the square blank in a chuck and use the tail stock to mark the center on the end.



Turn the blank round to about 11/16" diameter. (You will only be able to turn about half the blank since it is being held in a chuck. Drill a 1/16" diameter hole in the end of the blank about ½" deep. Turn a 3/8" tenon (to fit the hole in the body) about ¼" long and undercut the end to fit the curvature of the bell body. Turn a chamfer on the end of the handle and begin to shape the outside. (Note – this image is from a different project, but it shows these steps.)

Remove the handle from the lathe and chuck the 3/8" tenon in the lathe. Turn the remaining handle. If you have a very fine point live center, you may want to bring it up for support. It is OK to leave a dimple in the end of the handle since you will be drilling a hole. Sand and finish as desired.

Drill a hole in the end of the handle so you can attach a hanger (if desired). To help with the drilling process, you may want to consider using 2 tools. The first is a machinist drill center. Using this tool to drill a starter hole prevents a drill bit from skating across the top of a surface. The second is a pin vice with a finishing nail as a bit. I have broken quite a few 1/16" drill bits. I have never broken a finishing nail.



If you have not already sanded and finished the body and handle, please do so. Screw the screw eye into the end of the handle. If it is too tight, ream the hole with a drill bit. You do not want to break off the screw! Attach the wire hanger to the little bell and then glue the other end of the wire hanger into the end of the handle. Glue the handle to the body.

To facilitate the assembly process, securely connect the ornament hanger (or small wire) to the small bell. Measure about 1 ¼" above the bell and cut the wire. Bend the top ¼" down so that it slightly flares out. Thread the wire through the bottom of the wire and insert into the howl in the bottom of the handle. Secure with a few drops of CA glue. Then glue the handle to the body.