

RhinoPlastic Dave's Scale of difficulty rating = Moderately Difficult, 6 to 8 depending on the skill level and experience of the turner.

GENERAL INFORMATION

RhinoPlastic blanks are manufactured by Rhino Plastics, a company that started in Columbia, South Carolina as a rebirth of the domestic plastics industry. They manufacture Rhino Plastic blanks in the USA and have a strong commitment to quality, craftsmanship, and integrity. The blanks are made from a polyester resin which I've read started out as Silmar 41 but has since been re-formulated specifically for Rhino Plastics. They are hard and somewhat brittle so they are often considered "harder" to work with.

ACCORDING TO DISTRIBUTORS

According to one distributor's description, "RhinoPlastic blanks are specifically manufactured for pen turning from a special formula of clear polyester resin and the results show in the finished product. They exhibit a beautiful pearlescent like effect that shimmers and "dances" in the light. Many RhinoPlastic blanks have semi-translucent colors allowing for a depth not seen in other blanks. They turn smoothly and polish to a very high gloss shine using the same tools and supplies you're used to. Rhino Plastic blanks are 100% made in the USA".

Another distributor says, RhinoPlastic Pen Blanks are hand made here in the US from polyester resin combined with high quality dyes and micas. Highly economical, they require a bit more skill to turn but polish up beautifully".

COST AND AVAILABILITY

RhinoPlastic blanks are some of the lower cost blanks commercially available, but the quality, sparkle, and vibrancy of the finished product can be outstanding. They are available from various distributors and they come in over 135 colors. They typically cost in the \$3 to \$4 range as of the time of this writing.

PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS AND OTHERS COMMENTS

Because they are considered moderately difficult because of the hardness and somewhat brittle nature of the polyester resin, for drilling it would be recommended to not drill through the bottom of the blank, but to cut the blank longer than needed, drill to the depth based on the length of the brass tube, and then cut off the excess at the end to expose the bottom of the hole. It is also recommended that no more than $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch be drilled before removing the bit for cooling and for clearing the flutes. Turners have also reported that threading it can be problematic, so it may not be an ideal choice for making kit-less/bespoke pens. Some have stated that different colors seem to have different levels of brittleness (maybe due to the amount and type of pigments?)

Before turning, saw or sand the corners off of the blank to make it more cylindrical before starting to turn. Use sharp tools and make light cuts. Other IAP members, including myself, have recommended using Negative Rake Carbide cutters on RhinoPlastic blanks. Areas in the blanks can also be translucent, especially where it is thin, so painting the brass tube, or better, painting the inside of the blank is recommended

Many tuners also report a unique and strong smell when working with the blanks, likely associated with styrene which is commonly used as a reactive diluent in the production of many polyester resins.

DIFFICULTY RATING

Due to the base being a hard polyester resin, personal experience, and the reported experiences of many IAP members turning RhinoPlastic blanks, on Dave's Scale of difficulty where 1=it almost turns itself and 10=problematic and most difficult, I rate RhinoPlastic blanks as a 6 for skilled and experienced turners and an 8 for less experienced turners.

PICTURE OF RHINO PLASTIC BLANK (RhinoPlastic #EA-RPB106, Blue Sky, from Exotic Blanks)



PICTURE OF COMPLETED PEN USING RHINO PLASTIC (RhinoPlastic #EA-RPB106, Blue Sky, from Exotic Blanks. The kit is a Blue Titanium Cigar from Exotic Blanks with a Schmidt DSM 2006 Pencil Mechanism. A high gloss is possible even without additional finishes or waxes being applied).

