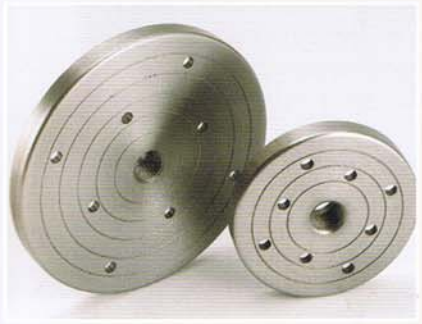
Faceplates

Most lathes come standard with a pair of centers (page 30) and one or more faceplates. Faceplates are useful for mounting non-spindle work—that is, any project that will be turned without needing the tailstock to support the workpiece. Examples of this are bowls, platters, and turned boxes.



Common sizes

There really is no standard in faceplate sizes. There are almost as many sizes as there are lathe manufacturers. However, the common sizes you'll find are 3", 4", 6", 8", and 10". Quality faceplates with be cast and then machined flat. They'll also have a series of rings scribed into the front to make it easier to center blanks on the plate, as shown in the upper left photo. You'll also find at least two sets of holes for mounting screws to attach a blank. ShopTip: If you turn green wood, drive screws through as many holes as possible to better grip the wet wood; many pro turners actually drill extra holes for even more screw-holding power.

Faceplate rings

Unlike a faceplate that threads onto the headstock spindle, a faceplate ring (upper right photo) is gripped by the jaws of a scroll chuck (see the sidebar on page 65 for more on using faceplate rings). A faceplate ring is screwed onto the back of a workpiece, allowing it to be firmly gripped by most scroll chucks. Why use a faceplate ring in lieu of a faceplate? Turners who work green wood use these rings all the time. In fact, they often have stacks of them that they attach to green blanks for rough turning and leave in place until the work is ready for final turning. This ensures that the blank can be remounted easily, accurately, and securely.

DOUBLE-SIDED TAPE FOR FACEPLATE WORK

A common problem when using a faceplate is dealing with the holes that the mounting screws leave in the blank. One way to get around this problem is to not use screws in the first place. Instead, you can attach a blank to a faceplate with double-sided tape. Granted, this isn't as secure as screws, but with a good-quality tape, you can achieve a sound grip that's solid enough to handle many turning tasks. A couple of words of caution here. First, make sure to use a cloth-based tape. Most turning catalogs sell tape designed specifically for turners. Don't use the thin plastic stuff—it won't grip the workpiece securely. Second, in order to get the optimum grip, both the faceplate and the blank must be flat and smooth. Check both with a straightedge and flatten either as needed.

Mount onto lathe

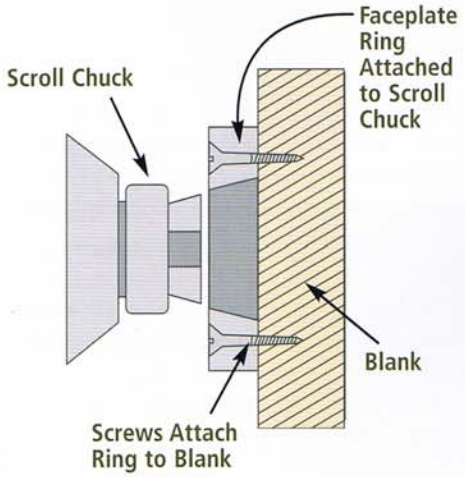
All that's left is to mount the faceplate with blank onto the lathe. To do this, first lock the spindle in place, if there's a spindle lock; if there isn't, have the spindle wrench on hand to keep it from rotating, as shown in the top photo. Then just thread the faceplate onto the headstock spindle so it bottoms out and is firmly in place. Depending on your faceplate, it may or may not have flats on the hub that you can use to tighten it onto the headstock spindle. This is rarely necessary, as the rotation of the blank will be opposite the thread rotation, and as soon as you start turning, the impact of the tool on the blank will tighten it onto the headstock spindle sufficiently. Make sure to release the spindle lock before turning on the lathe.

FACEPLATE RINGS

Faceplate rings are a lathe accessory that can save you a lot of time and headache if you turn a lot—particularly if you work with green wood. A faceplate ring is a steel collar with holes in it for mounting to a blank. What makes these special is that the inside edge of the ring is beveled to match the bevel on the jaws of a scroll chuck as shown in the drawing at right. In use, a ring is attached to a blank and then mounted onto a scroll chuck for turning (see page 83 for more on using a scroll chuck).

This may not seem like a big deal—why not just use a faceplate? The thing is, production turners who turn green wood typically turn a piece to a rough shape and then let it dry before finish-turning. This means mounting and remounting the workpiece, and it's difficult to re-center a piece on the lathe in the same position as it was first turned. Not a problem if you use a faceplate ring. Just attach the ring and leave it be. When the blank is dry, it can be quickly and accurately remounted on the lathe. Production turners have stacks of faceplate rings, as this is much less expensive than leaving multiple scroll chucks attached to a workpiece.

CROSS SECTION



Attach ring to blank. Attach a faceplate ring to a blank just as you would a faceplate; make sure to use all the holes in the ring.

Mount on lathe. Contract the jaws of the scroll chuck until the ring fits over the jaws, then expand them to tighten; you can remove and replace the workpiece as often as you'd like and it'll always be perfectly centered.