

Rock Tumbling Guidelines

SAFETY

- Always wear glasses to protect your eyes from the abrasive grit.
- Dry hands before plugging or unplugging the tumbler into an electrical outlet.
- Use a GFCI outlet or a shock buster.
- Use disposable gloves when washing the mud off the tumbled stones.
- Never put the tumbler mud down a drain, it will plug them.
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Key points to success:

PATIENCE, CLEANLINESS, and MORE PATIENCE!!!

- Work on a clean disposable surface (like newspaper) when loading the tumbler with rock and grit.
- Rotary tumblers in use need to be run in a catch pan to contain leaks and checked at least once per day. Vibratory tumblers do not need a catch pan but need to be checked every 8 to 12 hours. The checks are to monitor for proper operation.
- Beach stones are very difficult to tumble. Start learning how to tumble by purchasing a hard agate or jasper to tumble. Avoid buying mixed rock tumbling rough.
- The first time you start to tumble rocks have 2 to 3 times the volume of rocks as the size of the tumbler, i.e. a 3 pound tumbler needs 6 to 9 pounds of feed rock.
- Use plastic colanders to hold stones for washing off the grit. Metal colanders can leave silver colored streaks on the stones.
- Rotary tumblers are slower to tumble a batch of stones but are quieter and easier to clean.

My general sequence to tumble stones:

1. Coarse grind batch 1, wash, sort for good stones
2. Coarse grind batch 2, wash, sort for good stones
3. Combine good stones from coarse batches 1 & 2 to fill tumbler to proper level
4. Medium grind, wash
5. Fine grind, wash
6. Pre-polish, wash
7. Polish, wash
8. Burnish with soap and water, wash
9. Wash with distilled water & dry.

Between every step should be an overnight wash with soap and water in the tumbler and a through water rinse.

Good starter Tumblers:

Rotary- Lortone Model 3A (3 pound) or Model QT-6 (6 pound).

Vibratory - Raytech's Tumble-vibe 5 (4 pound).

Recommended Supplier: Kingsley North, inc., Norway MI, (800) 338-9280 or www.kingsleynorth.com

Sources for tumbling rough: www.therockshed.com and www.superagtes.com

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