

PREVENTING BROKEN POINTS

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It's so discouraging. Seems like everytime you get your points anywhere near a thin stage they break. They endsnap. They fold. Reaching your goal of thinner bifaces is just within your grasp and then it's snatched away in the blink of an eye. Well, I've been there. But I can honestly say that ever since I learned the things in this article, I haven't broken a single point while billet thinning as long as I didn't rush things and I took the time to apply the techniques. That brings up an important thing to remember. **There aren't any shortcuts** to creating those beautiful points. Besides, you don't want to hurry. Flintknapping is fun. Relax and concentrate on really seeing what the stone needs and you'll be happier with the results.

I learned the techniques described here from my good friend Jerry Ulrich, a knapper from Battle Creek, Michigan. After watching me knap a piece down to a 4 to 1 W/T (width to thickness) biface and then break it, he told me that there was no reason to ever break a point that had gotten that far. But I needed to memorize some things and practice them until they became second nature. I did what he said and he was right! I'll list them for you and then we'll discuss how to achieve each one of them. Here they are:

PLATFORM HAS TO BE BELOW THE CENTER LINE
ISOLATE THE PLATFORM
ABRADE
PROVIDE SUPPORT
DAMPEN VIBRATION

Every time you are going to strike a platform make sure you have done the things in the above checklist.

Platform Is Below The Center Line

First thing is to make sure that the place where your billet is going to connect is **below the center line**. When you hit below the centerline, a flake comes off. When your preform is thin, and you hit above the center line, it is almost certainly going to break. As the preform gets thinner, it's very important to take a little time and really look at each platform you make. You need to make sure they're right. Do what you can to make every platform as perfect as you can and you'll be rewarded with more predictable results. As you gain experience you'll find that there are times where you might spend five minutes just preparing a platform but the results are well worth it.