“Edge Preparation” For Percussion.
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Up to this point, most of the percussion work we have been talking about is considered preliminary or early stage work in the overall flint knapping process.

This preliminary work covers reducing a relatively large chunk, a spall or a nodule, down into a more manageable size by removing a number of smaller pieces. These removals often include the outer surface or cortex of a nodule.

Some of these cortex pieces can be useful as cutting tools and sometimes they can be further worked by pressure flaking to make smaller tools such as knives or projectile points, etc.

After this initial trimming of the rough outer surfaces of a chunk of stone we can proceed with working toward creating a core of good, uniform quality. This core can be used as the source of more small pieces for pressure flaking or made into a large tool itself, like an axe or chopper. This next stage is often called a "pre-form" ... since it is a preliminary shape which can be made into many different types of tools.

All of this work can be accomplished by percussion, using a "hammer stone" or a "soft hammer".

To move forward into the later stages of making finished tools by percussion with a "soft hammer" will require an understanding of "edge preparation" and "isolated platforms".

Using these advanced techniques makes it possible to produce wide, thin, straight
and sharp stone tools by percussion alone.
It also requires a lot of practice and patience.
Sometimes you will end up (unintentionally) with two pieces of stone ... which can be made into two different tools ... all from a single “pre-form”.
That goes with the territory. Breaking a piece in two happens. It is frustrating, but it does help you learn. And it goes give you more tools to count!

Preparing For Percussion
In reducing this percussion core of this black Oregon obsidian spall, I have “prepared the edge” and prepared an “isolated platform” to use a soft hammer to remove more large chips.
The edge has been ground from side to side with carborundum to roughen the edge and help the copper percussion tool get a grip at the edge. This grinding also creates tiny scratches which make it a little easier for a solid strike to initiate the fracture which will remove the chip which I want.
Now, holding the core firmly and solidly in place against the protective thick leather pad on my thigh, I strike the “prepared edge” at the “isolated platform”. Strike firmly, at the correct angle, and the resulting chip removal happens instantly, with a satisfying “crack!”
When I tilt the obsidian core up I can see the fine new chip laying on the lap pad, and, as I tilt the core even more, I can see the full extent of the effective percussion blow ... a great flake scar leaving a broad, flat surface on my percussion preform.
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