

BENDING ALUMINUM TUBING

By George White

In the June 2010 issue of Model Aviation I found a very useful idea that solves a problem that many of us face when we need to bend a piece of aluminum tubing. The idea was in supplied by Dave West for Joe Wagner's Engine Column, but it has uses beyond that.

He points out that the K&S tubing that most of us use is too hard to bend without kinking (don't we all know that!!!). To bend it successfully, you must soften (anneal) it. The procedure he uses is as follows:

1. Pass the tubing you want to bend through a candle flame just long enough to produce an even coat of black soot on all sides of the tubing.
2. With a small pencil torch (Radio Shack # 64-2188 Butane Soldering device at \$22 works well for this), carefully reheat the tubing just enough to burn off the black film.
3. While the tubing is still hot, immediately quench it in ice water.

The tubing will then be soft enough to bend. Another idea in the same column had to do with further preventing the tubing from kinking or flattening when you bend it. Wagner recommends inserting a piece of nylon weed whacker string inside the tubing while bending it.

The tubing will stay soft for several days, but will then return to being hard.

Check out the article for ideas on bending other types of tubing.