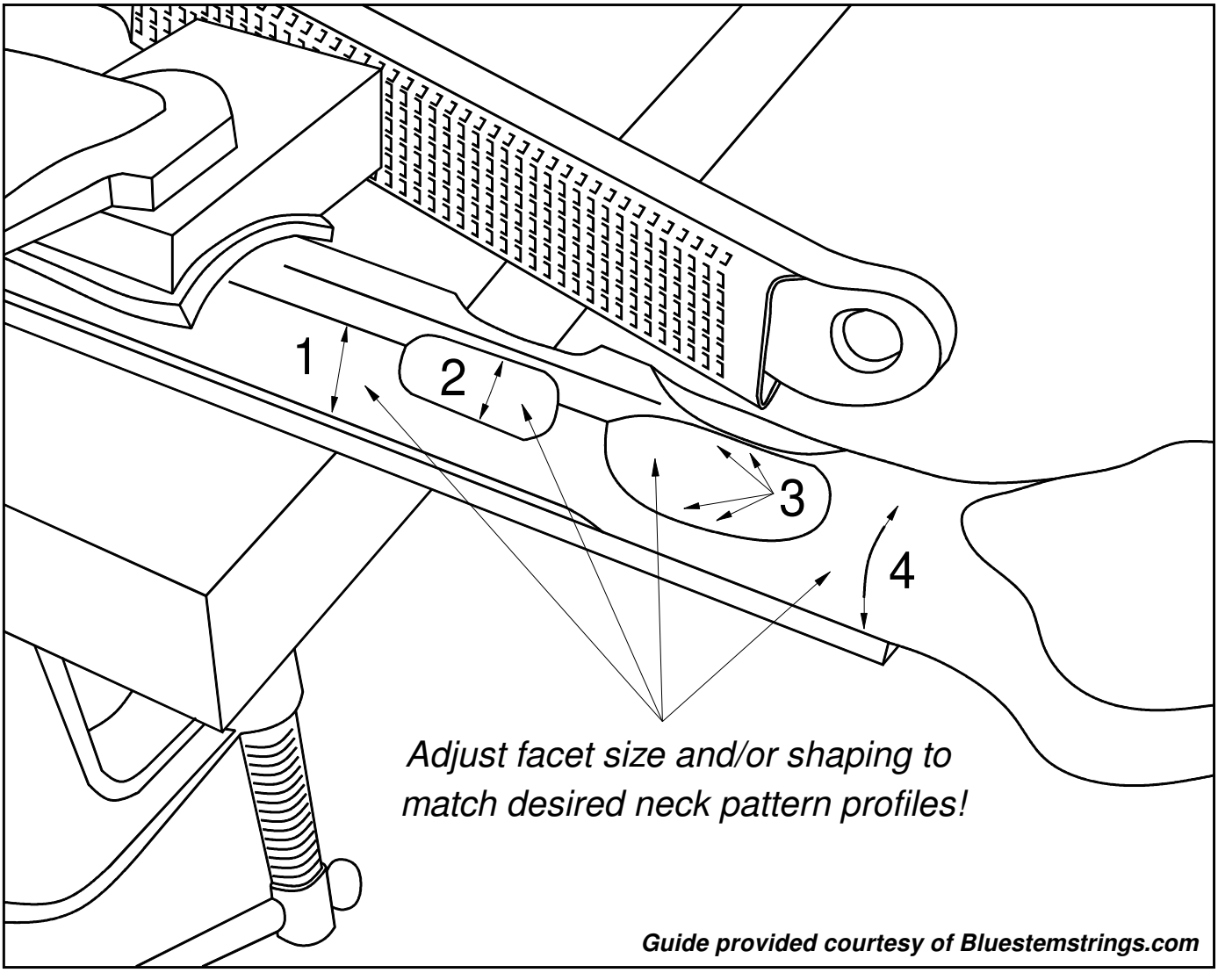
Shaping a banjo neck profile (quick overview / cheat sheet)

Side and rear profiles must first be defined by removal of excess material before rear contours can be shaped!

1. Each edge of the neck blank can be preliminarily shaped by removing a wedge from each side with a bandsaw. The wedge is approximately 30 degrees off vertical and starts about 1/8" above the fretboard edge.
2. A rasp (Microplane medium cut preferred...) is next used at approximately a 45 degree angle to form a flat defined by 1/2 the wedge width and extending to approximately 1/4" from the centerline of the rear of the neck.
3. The areas above and below the flat created in step #2 are further refined with the rasp to begin the process of blending the edges of the flats into a curve that matches the profiles shown on the drawing or shaping templates.
4. All of the surfaces are further refined to create a pleasing profile that extends from one edge of the fretboard to the opposite edge.

After preliminary shaping, the contours can be checked for any irregularities by the use of a 8" long board faced with 60 grit sandpaper. A good light source held obliquely to the surface helps with spotting any peaks or valleys in the surface. I follow this with a 5" circular random orbit sander fitted with 220 grit paper. I control my sander by pulsing it with a foot-operated momentary switch. A tremendous amount of fine control can be achieved by the use of the foot switch.

The heel is shaped and blended to the neck shaft with a half round rasp or 2" 80 grit sanding drum, then refined with the orbital sander. The neck to peg head transition is done with a small Dremel-mounted sanding drum.



Guide provided courtesy of Bluestemstrings.com