Sharpening Handbook

Because *sharp enough* … usually is not

Chapter 14

Scissors

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SharpeningHandbook.info

The full handbook, and the latest version of this chapter, are on the web at **SharpeningHandbook.info**. This chapter: November 2026.

Notes for All Scissors



SC-60 scissors jig



SVX-150 scissors jig

Jigs

The Tormek SC-60 Scissors jig is the best to use for these. The Tormek SVX-150 Scissors jig will also work well.

Grindstone Rotation

When sharpening scissors, use the vertical position with the grindstone rotating towards the blade. This keeps the SC-60 or SVX-150 properly aligned to the grindstone. (If you use the horizontal position, the grindstone will pull the scissors away from the jig.)

However, if you are sharpening left-handed scissors and they cannot be disassembled into the two pieces, you will need to sharpen from the horizontal position as the piece not being sharpened would interfere with the process otherwise (it would hit the Tormek machine).

Diamond Grinding Wheels

Use of diamond grinding wheels is generally not recommended. The sharpness of the angle for sharpening can damage the diamond wheel. (And the SG grindstone works quite well.)

That said, some scissors are made from very hard metals and a diamond grinding wheel may be necessary, especially if the sharpener will need to clean up a bad grind from before.



Scissors align correctly



Scissors with gap at the ends



Scissors with bottom blade too long



Scissors with top blade too long

Tip Shortening

After sharpening, if the tips of the of the scissors do not meet, the length of one or both blades should be shortened. The most commonly seen is in the second picture where there is simply a gap at the ends where they should meet.

The black lines in the bottom 3 pictures to the left outline (in a very exaggerated manner) the shape of the blades after the ends have been shortened.

This can generally be done on the same grinding wheel as the one used to sharpen the blade. The sharpener should also check to ensure there are no sharp edges on the backs of the blades which are raised by doing this. If this happens, those should be cleaned up.

Note to the sharpener: if the scissors are very high quality, you may want to talk with the owner before making any of these adjustments.

As you do this more often, you may find that you can identify this risk before starting the sharpening process. If so, it is best to secure approval before making any changes to what may be very beloved scissors (especially if they were handed down from a loved mother or grandmother).

More Information

Books & Papers

- Steve Bottorff has been kind enough to let me present information that he has gathered from many years of expert sharpening experience. His web site (SharpeningMadeEasy.com (sharpening-madeeasy.com)) contains additional information that could be useful, including instructional videos and manuals.
    - One of his great documents is Scissor Sharpening (sharpeningmadeeasy.com), and this page really offers great instructions for the sharpener.

Videos & Presentations

- 7 Essential Scissor Sharpening Tormek Tips (YouTube video). Bas does a great job showing how to best sharpen scissors. Bas runs a sharpening business and talks from his experience at sharpening scissors for pay.
- Tormek Live Sharpening Class - Part 2. Axe & scissors sharpening (YouTube video). Sèbastian and Wolfgang from Tormek will go through sharpening of axes and scissors.
- Jeff Farris - Scissor Sharpening with Tormek (YouTube video)
- Steve Bottorff - Sharpening Scissors on the Tormek Wet Grinder (YouTube video)
- Tormek Live Sharpening Class: Part 28 (YouTube video). Sèbastian & Hugo from Tormek discuss the advantages of the new SC-60 Scissors jig, and demonstrate how to use it and take advantage of the new features.
- Tormek Scissors Jig SVX-150 (YouTube video)
- Tormek 50 Year Anniversary Tip: # 1 - Quick SVX-150 Scissors Jig angle setup (YouTube video). This is a great quick hint on using the WM-200 AngleMaster to quickly setup the angle for the SVX-150 Scissors Jig.
- Gear Heads | Which Kitchen Shears are a Cut Above the Rest? (YouTube video)
- Tormek AngleMaster WM-200 (YouTube video)

Web Sites

- How to Sharpen Pinking Shears (wolffindustries.com), by Wolff Industries

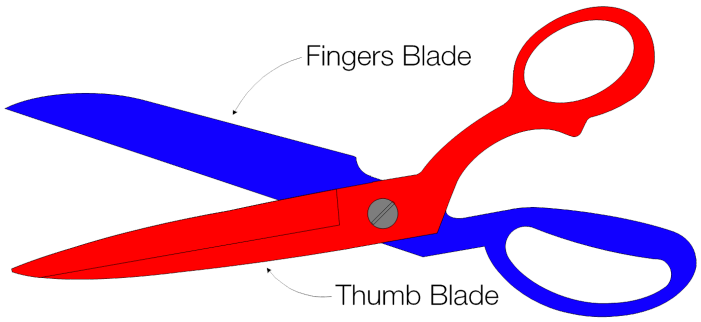
> **Sharpness Scale** - see Chapter 1.
> **Ongoing maintenance** - see Chapter 4, *Metalworking Tools*.

General Scissors

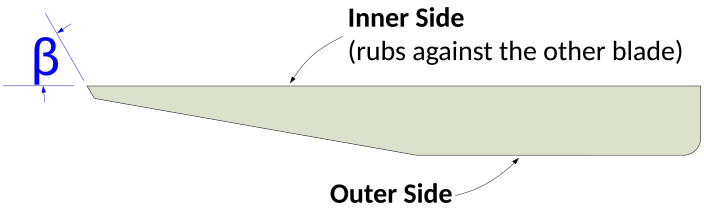
Scissors are sharpened according to the angles shown below.

Unless the scissors need to have a really honed edge, honing is not recommended for scissors. Stop after the sharpening step (but with a high grit level - 1,000 or so).

Some scissors have differing angles for the **Thumb Blade** (shown in **red**) vs. the **Fingers Blade** (shown in **blue**). In those cases, separate angles are shown in the table below.



Scissor parts



Sectional view of the cutting blade

> *I believe more in the scissors than I do in the pencil.*
> Truman Capote

General Guidelines			
Type	β_{Thumb}	$\beta_{Fingers}$	Sharpness
General Scissors	60°		5
Bandage scissors	70°		6
Cast iron paper scissors	65° - 85°		6
Children's safety scissors	90°		3
Cuticle scissors	60° - 65°		4
Nail scissors	60° - 65°		4

Notes & Comments

Children's safety scissors
These could be sharper than a 3 rating; however, this will also make them easier to damage your fine linens.

Salon or Barber Scissors

When sharpening salon or barber scissors, the Tormek is not recommended. Instead, use a specialized tool like the Hira-To Flat Hone Sharpening Machine. If you do choose to sharpen these scissors on the Tormek, be sure to use the SJ Japanese Waterstone.

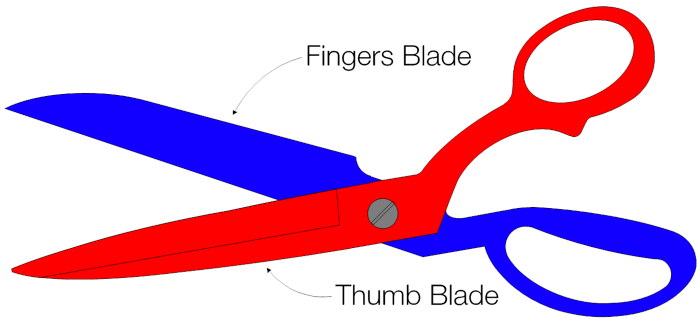
> **Sharpness Scale** - see Chapter 1.
> **Notes for All Scissors** - at the start of this chapter.
> **Ongoing maintenance** - see Chapter 4, *Metalworking Tools*.
> **Grindstones and Other Sharpening Media** - see Chapter 2.

Kitchen Scissors

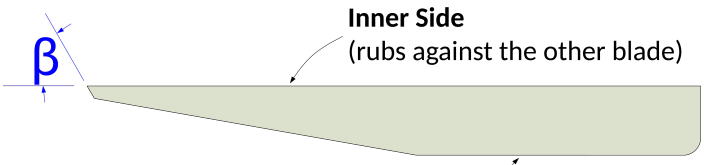
Scissors are sharpened according to the angles shown below.

Honing is not recommended for kitchen scissors.

Some scissors have differing angles for the **Thumb Blade** (shown in **red**) vs. the **Fingers Blade** (shown in **blue**). In those cases, separate angles are shown in the table below.



Scissor parts



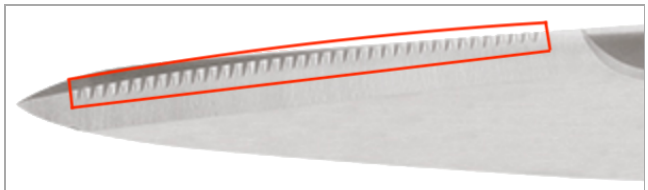
Sectional view of the cutting blade

Cooking is all about people. Food is maybe the only universal thing that really has the power to bring everyone together. No matter what culture, everywhere around the world, people eat together.
Guy Fieri

General Guidelines			
Type	β_{Thumb}	$\beta_{Fingers}$	Sharpness
General Scissors	60°		6
Japanese kitchen shears	55°	50°	6
Wusthof kitchen shears	65°	55°	6

Coarseness to the Blade

There is a recommendation by some that the **Thumb Blade** have some coarseness to it. This is so the meat doesn't slide out when being cut (e.g., when cutting chicken which has not been de-boned -- a YouTube video from America's Test Kitchen below demonstrates this).

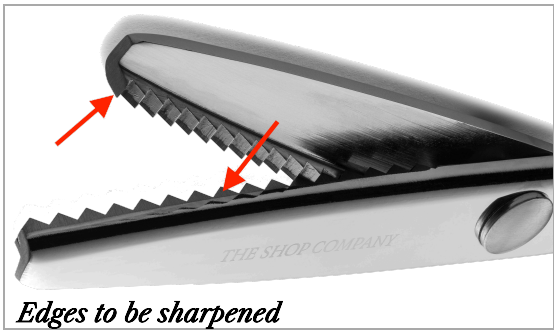

Shun Multi-Purpose Shears

The Shun Multi-Purpose Shears have notches in the thumb blade to address this, and a picture of the notches in their design is highlighted in the picture to the left.

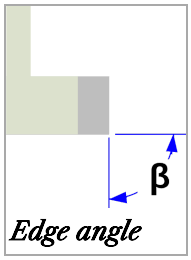
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Pinking Shears Scissors

Pinking Shears Scissors cut by a shearing action. Thusly, the sharpening is done on the edges facing each other. These are denoted in the picture to the right using red arrows.



Edges to be sharpened



Edge angle

DO NOT make any adjustments to the triangular edges. These edges must mesh perfectly with the mating edges, and any grinding on those will make the scissors not work properly.

If the edge angles need to be re-established, use the notes for **β** as shown below.

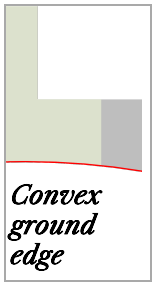
For Pinking Shears Scissors, honing is recommended.

Sewing is something you do to calm you, to relax you.
Lainie Myklebust

General Guidelines

Type	β	Sharpness
General Pinking Shears Scissors	80° - 90°	6

Notes & Comments


Convex ground edge

I found that the edge of pinking shears scissors are often ground using a round stone, and it results in a shape as shown to the left. The ground edge is denoted with a red line in an exaggerated way.

When sharpening pinking shears scissors, I find I can hold the edge against the stone using a free-hand manner. Typically, a quick touch-up on the SJ Japanese Waterstone works quite well.

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Notes for All Scissors - at the start of this chapter.
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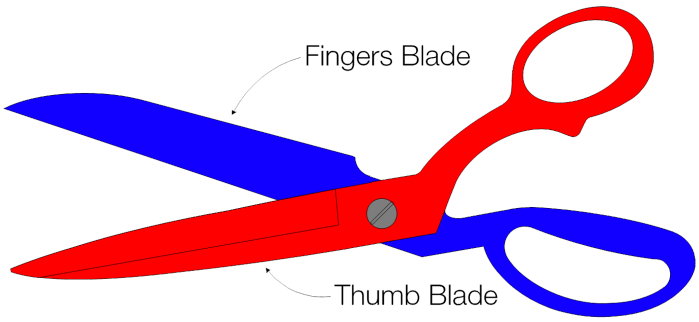
Sewing Scissors

Scissors are sharpened according to the angles shown below.

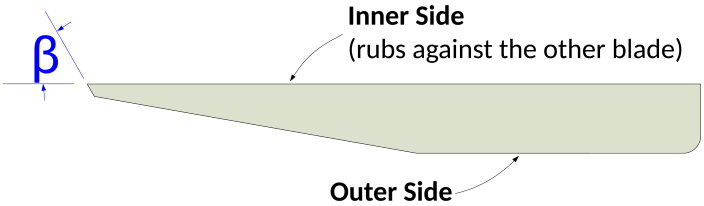
Some scissors have differing angles for the **Thumb Blade** (shown in **red** on the picture below) vs. the **Fingers Blade** (shown in **blue** on the picture below). In those cases, separate angles are shown in the table below.

The picture to the right shows a sectional view of the cutting blade.

Beautiful things come together one stitch at a time.
Anonymous



Scissor parts



Sectional view of the cutting blade

General Guidelines

Type	β_{Thumb}	$\beta_{Fingers}$	Sharpness
General Scissors	60°		6
Clayton 7”	70°		6
DaVinci - 2 ½” blade	60°	45°	6
Delica - 3 ½” blade desk scissors	50°		6
Embroidery scissors	60° - 65°		6
Fabric shears, ≥ 7”	50° - 55°		6
Fiskars dressmaker	60°		6
Gingher 'Knife Edge' dressmaker	65°	45°	6
Gingher snips resharpened	55°		6
Gingher thread snips	75°		6
Industrial shears, ≥ 7”	50° - 55°		6
Italian pinking shears	75°		6
Kleencut	70°		6
Pinking shears	85° - 90°		6

General Guidelines			
Type	β_{Thumb}	$\beta_{Fingers}$	Sharpness
Tailor shears, ≥ 7”	50° - 55°		6
Wiss dressmaker	65°	60°	6
Wiss pinking shears, old style	75°		6
Wiss thread nippers	80°		6

Notes & Comments

Cleanup After Sharpening

Sewing scissors get used on cloth which could easily be messed up badly if any leftover materials from the sharpening are not removed. Either acetone or isopropyl alcohol is recommended for cleaning the blade after honing.

It is also worth advising the user that such treatment is worth considering before use.

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