



# 'Always' Is Important When Inspecting Surgical Instruments



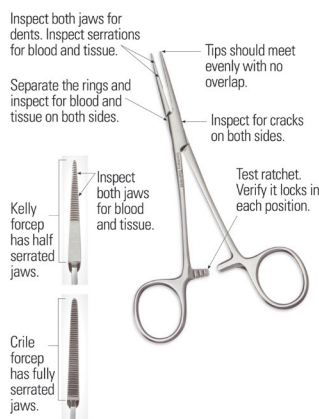
BY RICK SCHULTZ

**S**urgical instrument inspection, also often referred to as instrument care and handling, begins at the point of use. The Operating Room (OR) team must perform proper instrument care and treatment during the procedure and immediately after its completion. It is important to avoid allowing blood and bioburden to dry on instruments and never to allow instruments to soak post-operatively in saline, which can lead to corrosion.

All instruments require proper point-of-use care and diligent inspection—each and every time they are used. This article addresses the eight most popular instruments (by volume). Note the “always” in each inspection instruction. This is essential because inspection must never be rushed or overlooked, even under the pressure of time constraints.

## #1: Ring-handled forceps/hemostats

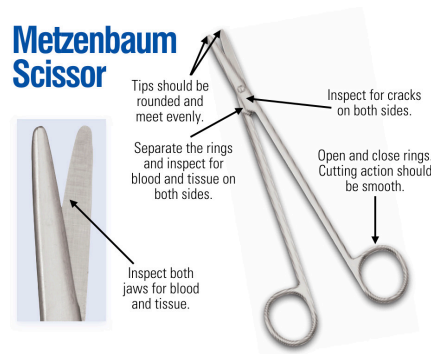
- Always separate the rings and inspect the box lock (hinge area) for blood, tissue and cracks on both sides.
- Always inspect the jaws/serrations for blood and tissue and verify that the jaws properly meet.
- Always test the ratchet. Ensure it locks in each position.



## #2: Scissors

- Always open rings and inspect hinge area for blood, tissue and cracks on both sides.
- Always inspect the screw for trapped blood.
- Always open and close the scissors to ensure a smooth cutting action.
- Always inspect the distal tips on scissors (and other sharps), making sure the tips are intact.

### Metzenbaum Scissor



- Always create and follow a scissor sharpness testing program for the Sterile Processing department (SPD). Use red scissor test material for scissors longer than 4½", and yellow scissor test material for scissors 4½" inches and shorter.

### Scissor Testing Material





### #3: Needle holders

- Always separate the rings and inspect hinge areas for blood, tissue and cracks on both sides.
- Always test the ratchet, ensuring it locks in each position.
- Always inspect the jaws for tread wear. If the tips are worn, send the instrument out for repair.



### #4 Tissue/dressing forceps

- Always remember that tissue forceps have teeth and dressing forceps have serrations.
- Always verify that the teeth on tissue forceps are present.
- Always inspect the teeth for blood and tissue and check that the teeth properly align.
- Always inspect handles for blood and cracks on both sides.

### #5: Retractors

- Always ensure there are no burrs present.
- Always verify that self-retaining retractor levers have a spring action.
- Always check for damage on skin hooks and handheld retractor prongs.

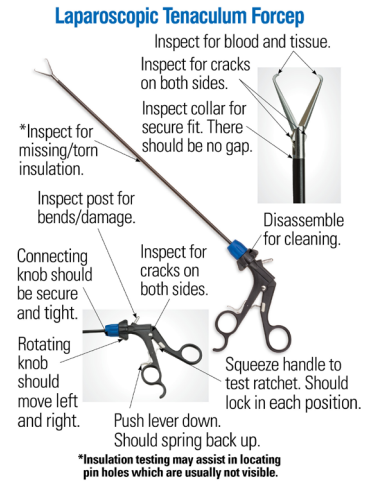
### #6: Suction devices

- Always check that the stylet is present when assembling a surgical tray.
- Always verify that there are no dents in the tube.
- Always completely disassemble Pool and Yankauer suction tubes for effective cleaning.



### #7: Laparoscopic instruments

- Always disassemble instruments properly.
- Always inspect and test the insulation.
- Always inspect distal tips for blood, tissue and cracks.



### #8: Scalpel handles

- Always verify that the proper knife handles are assembled for the tray.
- Always inspect the blade grooves.

Scalpel Blade Handles #3, #3 Long, #4, #7



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