



# From Good to Great

## Advanced Understanding and Care of Needle Holders Part 3: Test Your Knowledge



BY RICK SCHULTZ

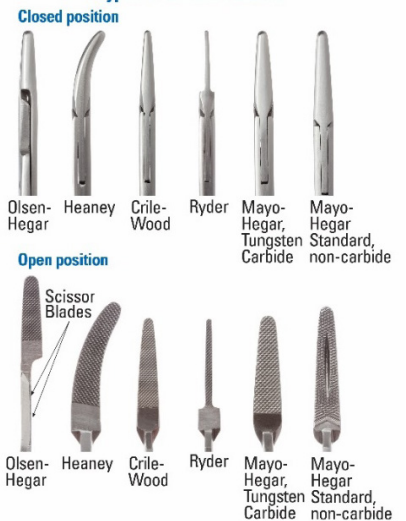
**T**here are many different types of needle holders used for various procedures, but all have the same basic parts. Typically, they are constructed of stainless steel and have stainless-steel jaws or tungsten carbide jaw inserts. Needle holder jaws comprised of tungsten carbide are the most popular, and the jaws can be replaced without replacing the entire needle holder. The gold color on the needle holder rings visibly identifies that the jaws contain tungsten carbide. Tungsten carbide is much harder than stainless steel and does not wear out as quickly. The jaws of non-gold needle holders are made of stainless steel and are not replaceable. Once the stainless steel jaws wear out, the entire instrument must be replaced.

Read the following and then answer the five-question quiz to test your comprehension of proper care of needle holders for a chance to win a set of the author's Instrument Coaching Cards™. To submit your answers, see the instructions and QR code at the end of the quiz.

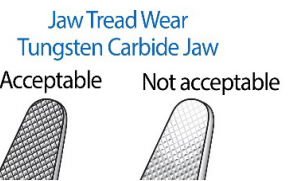
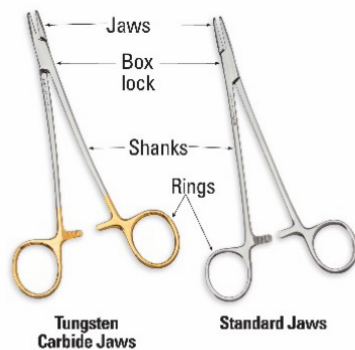
**Q: Do all needle holder jaws wear out, and where does the wear typically occur?**

**A:** Yes. All makes and models of needle holder jaws wear out over time. The wear typically occurs at the tip.

### Types of Needle Holders



### Mayo-Hegar Needle Holder, Tungsten Carbide Jaws and Standard Jaws



**Q: Why do needle holders only wear out at the tip?**

**A:** When needle holders are used, the needle is held near the tip, not in the middle of the jaw. As a result, the tip is the primary area that wears out on the device.





### Q: What do gold handles on a needle holder indicate?

**A:** The gold color on needle holder rings indicates the jaws contain tungsten carbide. Tungsten carbide is much harder than stainless steel, wears out more slowly and can be replaced.

### Q: Do gold-handled needle holders have replaceable jaws?

**A:** Yes. The majority have jaws that can be repaired onsite by a vendor.

### Q: Can gold-handled needle holders be placed in ultrasonic cleaners?

**A:** Absolutely. The belief that “ultrasonic cleaning will make the jaws pop out” is a myth; however, if the jaws did pop out in an ultrasonic cleaner, it would be better than if they dislocated during use.

### Q: What is the purpose of smooth-jaw needle holders?

**A:** The smooth jaw is designed to hold extremely fine suture needles. Smooth-jaw needle holders also wear out over time.

### Q: What causes the neck of a needle holder to crack?

**A:** Needle holders crack in the neck when a large needle is used in a small needle holder. Also, cracks can occur when the device is used incorrectly like pliers to pull pins and twist wire. This type of crack is not repairable.

## Quiz

### From Good to Great: Knowledge Required for Advanced Understanding of Needle Holders, Part 3

Please answer these five true or false (T/F) questions.

1. The jaws of non-gold-handled needle holders are made of stainless steel. T/F
2. When needle holders crack at the neck, they should be removed from service and sent out for repair. T/F
3. Gold-handled needle holders indicate the presence of a tungsten carbide jaw. These types of jaws can be replaced. T/F
4. Gold-handled needle holders can be placed in an ultrasonic cleaner. T/F
5. A needle should only be held in the middle area of a needle holder’s jaw. T/F

Scan this QR code to submit your answers online. The deadline to submit is April 10, 2024. The names of all participants who submit correct answers will be entered in a drawing to win a set of Instrument Coaching Cards™. Good luck! 🎰



**RICK SCHULTZ**, the Instrument Whisperer™, is an author, inventor, lecturer, and the retired Chief Executive Officer of Spectrum Surgical Instruments Corp. He served as contributing editor of HSPA’s *Central Service Technical Manual* (fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth editions). Schultz authored the textbooks *Inspecting Surgical Instruments: An Illustrated Guide* and *The World of Surgical Instruments: The Definitive Inspection Textbook*, which was released in June 2018. In October 2021, Schultz published the veterinary medicine textbook *The World of Surgical Instruments for Animal Health*. Schultz was named HSPA’s Educator of the Year in 2002 and the American Hospital Association Educator of the Year in 2006. In 2007, he was named by *Healthcare Purchasing News* as one of the 30 Most Influential People in Healthcare Sterile Processing. Schultz currently provides educational lectures to Sterile Processing professionals at HSPA’s annual conferences and conducts Operating Room personnel lectures across the country.

**Disclaimer:** The views and opinions expressed in this column are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of HSPA. The content provided in this column is also not a reflection or representation of any other company or organization with which the author may be affiliated.