



# Let's Cut Deep on Scissor Inspection: 5 Most Popular Scissors



BY RICK SCHULTZ

## #1- Mayo scissors, straight and curved

These scissors are used for cutting and dissecting tissue. This scissor will be found in most surgical instrument sets. There are four designs of the Mayo scissor in both straight and curved patterns. The sharpness test standard for these scissors is red scissor test material.

- a) **Standard Mayo** - 6 ¾": Has beveled cutting blades and is made entirely of stainless steel.
- b) **Mayo Noble** - 6 ½": The distinguishing feature of this scissor is that its blades are rounded. This scissor is also used for cutting and dissecting tissue.
- c) **Mayo SuperCut** - 6 ¾": Distinguished by its black rings and beveled blades, however, one blade is sharpened very differently (to a knife edge). The other blade has a standard edge and this edge often is serrated to prevent tissue from slipping. This scissor dulls more quickly than all other Mayo scissors; therefore, it should be sharpened a minimum of three times per year.
- d) **Mayo, Tungsten Carbide** - 6 ¾": Distinguished by its gold rings, the blades are beveled, and each blade contains a tungsten carbide



(TC) inlay, which makes the scissor stay sharper longer. These inlays, however, cannot be replaced. It is key to test the TC scissor for sharpness before sending it out for sharpening. This prevents over-sharpening,

which shortens the life of this expensive scissor. Tungsten carbide is a harder metal than stainless steel; therefore, this scissor holds its cutting edge longer than a standard stainless-steel scissor.



## #2 - Metzenbaum scissors, straight and curved

These scissors are used for cutting delicate tissue, and for blunt dissection. This scissor will be found in most surgical instrument sets. Like the Mayo scissor, there are three designs of a Metzenbaum scissor. The sharpness test standard for this scissor is red scissor test material.

- a) **Standard Metzenbaum** – 7" (*most popular*): Has softly rounded blades and is made entirely of stainless steel.
- b) **Metzenbaum SuperCut**: Has two popular lengths (5 ½" and 7"), is distinguished by its black rings and has softly rounded blades; however, one blade is sharpened very differently (to a knife edge). The other blade has a standard edge and

this edge often is serrated to prevent tissue from slipping. This scissor dulls more quickly than all other Metzenbaum scissors; therefore, it should be sharpened a minimum of three times per year.

- c) **Metzenbaum, Tungsten Carbide** – 7": Distinguished by its gold rings. The blades are softly rounded, and each blade contains a TC inlay, which makes the scissor stay sharper longer. These inlays, however, cannot be replaced. It is key to test the TC scissor for sharpness before sending it out for sharpening. This prevents over sharpening, which shortens the life of this expensive scissor. Tungsten carbide is a harder metal than stainless steel; therefore, this scissor holds its cutting edge longer than a standard stainless-steel scissor.

## #3 - Operating scissors, straight and curved:

Used for cutting and dissecting tissue and cutting surgical drapes and suture. The Operating scissor has three distinct, distal tips that include:

- a) **Blunt/Blunt** – 5 ½"
- b) **Sharp/Blunt** – 5 ½"
- c) **Sharp/Sharp** – 5 ½"

The sharpness test standard for this scissor is red scissor test material.

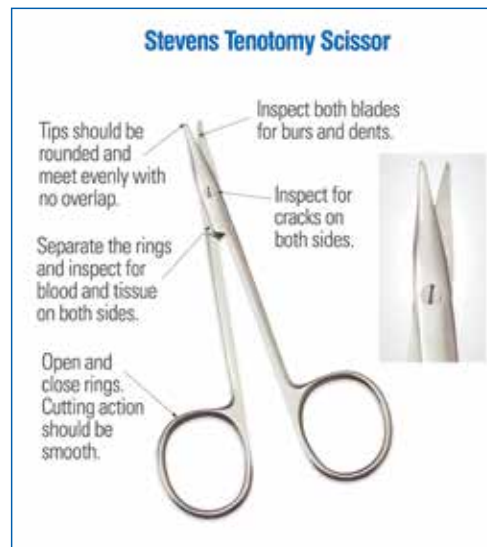
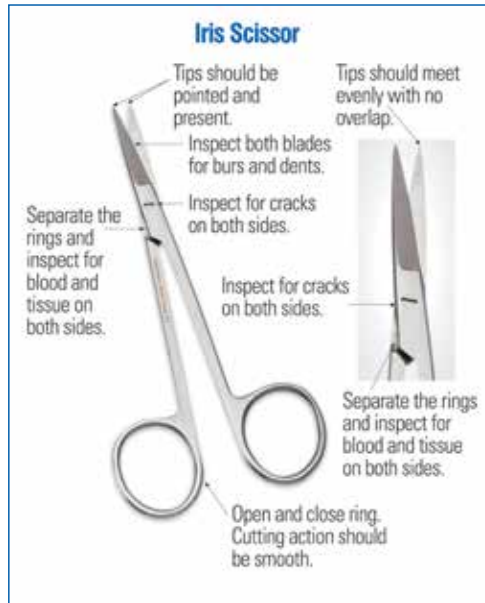


#### #4 - Iris scissor, straight and curved – 4 ½"

Used for very delicate tissue dissection. This fine-pointed, sharp/sharp scissor is very delicate and highly susceptible to tip damage. The sharpness test standard for this scissor is yellow scissor test material.

#### #5 - Stevens Tenotomy scissor, straight and curved - 4" and 4 ½"

Used for cutting tissue in ear, nose & throat, ophthalmic and plastic surgeries. Unlike the Iris scissor, which has pointed tips, the Stevens Tenotomy scissor has rounded tips. The blades on a Stevens Tenotomy scissor become reduced as it moves to the rounded distal tips. The sharpness test standard for this scissor is yellow scissor test material. ©



**Q** How do I know my repair vendor knows how to properly sharpen scissors? We send out a lot of scissors to be sharpened and they still generate complaints from the surgeons.

**A** The first thing you do is ask your repair vendor to explain and demonstrate how they determine the scissor's sharpness. Secondly, observe how the repair technician holds the scissor. The thumb position should just be partially inserted in one ring and the middle finger or ring finger should be in the other ring. The final part of this repair vendor test is having them test the sharpness using scissor test material. The repair vendor should be testing the front third of the scissor blades. Finally, when instruments or surgical sets come back from repair, take the time to spot-check scissor sharpness by using scissor sharpness test material.



**RICK SCHULTZ**, the Instrument Whisperer™, is an author, inventor and lecturer, and the retired Chief Executive Officer of Spectrum Surgical Instruments Corp. He served as contributing editor of IAHCMM's Central Service Technical Manual (Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth Editions). Rick 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. Schultz was named IAHCMM's Educator of the Year in 2002, and in 2006, was named American Hospital Association Educator of the Year. 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 Central Service professionals at IAHCMM's annual conferences and conducts operating room personnel lectures across the country.