



# From Good to Great

## Advanced Understanding & Care of Scissors, Part 1: Test Your Knowledge



BY RICK SCHULTZ

**S**afety- and quality-focused Sterile Processing technicians must have a deep understanding of the surgical scissor because it is a hospital's most-used surgical device. Read this article and answer the five-question quiz to test your comprehension of the content and be entered 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 scissors dull?

**A:** Yes. Every scissor becomes dull, regardless of its size, specialty, manufacturer or design.

### Q: How often should scissors be tested?

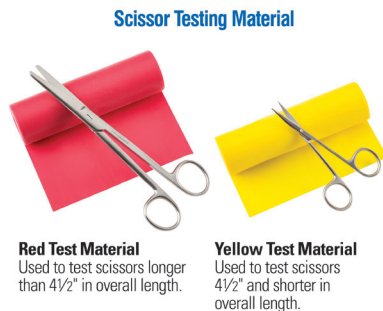
**A:** Scissors should be tested at least once per week; however, the proactive approach involves designating two days each week for scissor testing. An instrument tracking system allows a Sterile Processing department to track sharpening frequency. By implementing routine, weekly testing, every scissor in inventory will eventually be sharpened.

### Q: Can all non-disposable scissors be resharpenered?

**A:** Yes, but it is still essential to ensure the repair vendor is properly trained, especially on black-handled SuperCut scissors.

### Q: Which scissor test material should be used?

**A:** The industry standard is to use red scissor test material for scissors longer than 4½" and yellow scissor test material for scissors 4½" and shorter.

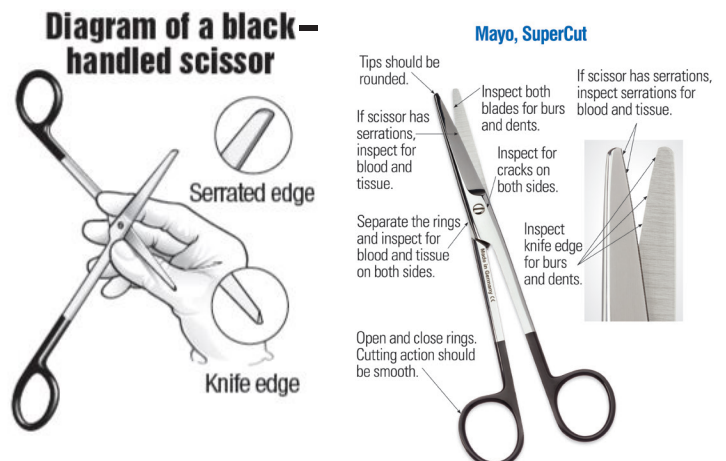


### Q: Is it true that certain scissors need to be sharpened more often than others?

**A:** Yes. Black-handled SuperCut scissors need to be sharpened most frequently (typically quarterly) because the knife edge dulls more quickly.

### Q: Do all black-handled scissors have a serrated edge?

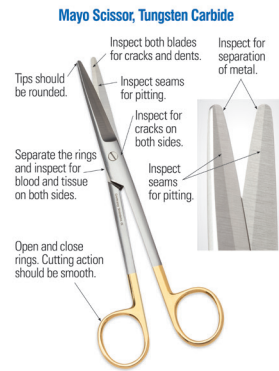
**A:** No. Black-handled SuperCut scissors can be with or without a serrated edge. Although, the most popular configuration of SuperCut scissors has one serrated blade and one knife blade.





### Q: Do gold-handled scissors require frequent sharpening?

**A:** No. Gold-handled tungsten carbide scissors stay sharper longer; therefore, they should first be tested before being sent for sharpening.



### Q: Why is tungsten carbide used to manufacture scissors?

**A:** Tungsten carbide is bonded (soldered or welded) to a stainless-steel scissor's cutting edge because it is harder and stays sharper longer than stainless steel. Gold-handled scissors indicate that the device has tungsten carbide jaws.

### Q: Can tungsten carbide scissor blades be replaced?

**A:** No. Scissors with gold rings have tungsten carbide blades that cannot be replaced when they wear down. This wear is a result of years of sharpening and the scissors must be replaced.

### Q: Should scissors be taken apart to clean?

**A:** No. Scissors must never be disassembled to clean.

### Q: What questions should I ask my repair technician to evaluate their scissor-testing skills?

**A:** Questions to ask your repair technician include:

- Will you show me your test material?
- What is the difference between gold-handled and black-handled scissors?
- Can you demonstrate scissor testing with the testing material? (Watch to ensure they cut through to the tip.)

Another good strategy is placing a perfectly sharpened scissor in the repair box to check whether the repair technician sharpens it again: they should only sharpen devices that require it based on testing. Additionally, I recommend placing one or two disposable/Pakistan-manufactured scissors in the repair box to see if the repair technician repairs them and charges you. A good repair technician will know that disposable/Pakistan-made scissors should not be sharpened.

**Correction:** The Instrument Whisperer column published in the Sept/Oct 2021 and July/August 2023 issues of *PROCESS* featured tungsten carbide needle holder data that was incorrectly applied to a tungsten carbide mayo scissor photo. We apologize for this graphic design error on the image.

## Quiz—

### From Good to Great: Knowledge Required for Advance Understanding of Scissors

Please answer the five questions below. Note: T/F indicates a true-or-false question.

1. Because of a gold-handled scissor's knife edge, the scissor must be sharpened most frequently. T/F
2. Yellow test material should be used to check sharpness of which scissor?
  - a. Scissors longer than 5"
  - b. Only scissors that measure exactly 4½"
  - c. All scissors
  - d. Scissors 4½" and shorter
3. All scissors become dull. T/F
4. All non-disposable scissors can be resharpened. T/F
5. Tungsten carbide jaws in a gold-handled scissor are harder and stay sharper longer than a standard stainless-steel scissor. T/F

Scan this QR code to submit your answers online. The deadline to submit is Dec. 8, 2023. All participants' names will be entered into a drawing for 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.