

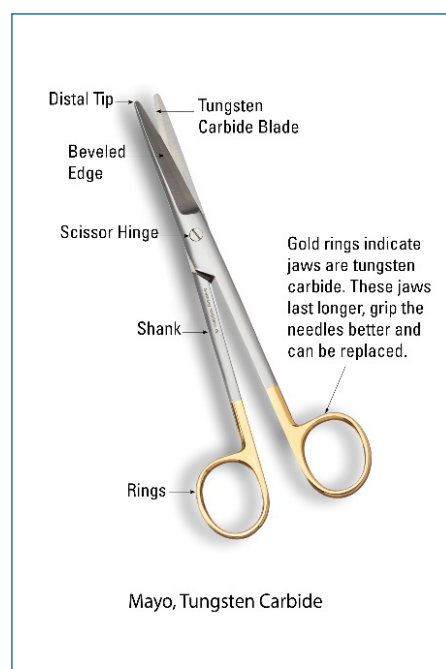


Cutting and Sewing: Scissor and Needle Holder FAQs



BY RICK SCHULTZ

What follows are some of the most commonly asked questions about scissors:



Q: Do all scissors go dull?

A: Yes. Every scissor goes dull, regardless of size, specialty, manufacturer or design.

Q: Does sterilization dull a scissor?

A: Generally, no. However, when old autoclaves produce dirty steam, the scissor blade edges can become stained, which can cause the scissor to not cut properly.

Q: Can all scissors be resharpener?

A: Yes. Every scissor can be resharpener. Make sure the repair vendor is properly trained, especially on SuperCut scissors (black-handled).

Q: How often should scissors be tested?

A: Scissors should be tested one to two times per week. The proactive approach is picking two days per week as scissor testing days. Using an instrument tracking system will allow the facility to track sharpening frequency. By using this proactive approach, a large percentage of your inventory's scissors will be tested.

Q: Should gold-handled scissors be sharpened more often?

A: No. Gold-handled scissors stay sharper longer. They should first be tested before sending them out for sharpening.

Q: Can scissors be over-sharpened?

A: Yes. Scissors can be over-sharpened by inexperienced repair technicians. Only send out dull scissors for resharpener. Not all scissors in a set will need to be sharpened at the same time.

Q: Do all repair technicians know how to sharpen scissors?

A: No. Experience and proper training are key, and many times, repair technicians are learning on your expensive instrument inventory. The hospital should verify the training and employment history of all repair technicians. On average, a repair technician needs nine to 12 months of training. This training should not be performed on the facility's instrument inventory. You cannot teach experience.

Scissor Testing Material



Q: Is the scissor testing standard to use red and yellow scissor test material?

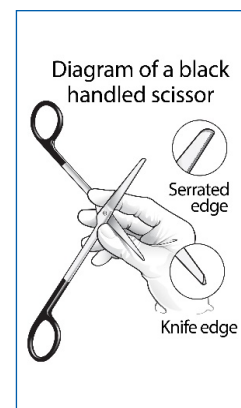
A: Yes. The industry standard is to use red scissor test material for scissors longer than 4 1/2" in overall length and yellow scissor test material for scissors that measure 4 1/2" and shorter. Yellow scissor test material is used on 4 1/2" scissors and long micro scissors.

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

A: Yes. The black-handled SuperCut scissor needs to be sharpened the most (quarterly) because it has a knife edge.

Q: Can serrated scissors be sharpened?

A: Yes. The repair technician should know how to sharpen a serrated scissor. But remember, experience cannot be taught. An inexperienced repair technician may not know the correct method.

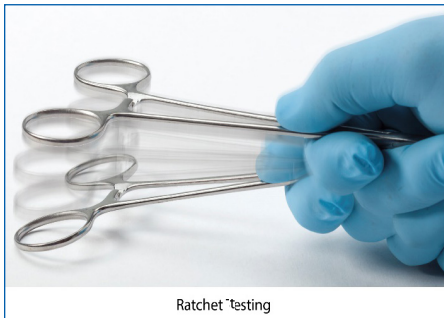




What follows are some of the most commonly asked questions about needle holders:

Q: Can gold-handled needle holders go into ultrasonic cleaners?

A: Absolutely. The myth that “ultrasonic cleaning will make the jaws pop out” is not true; however, if the jaws did pop out in the ultrasonic cleaner, that would be better than if they did so in the patient.



Ratchet “testing”

Q: How are the ratchets of a needle holder tested?

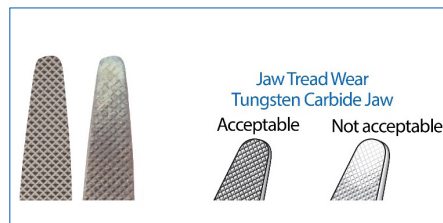
A: To test, click each ratchet slowly to see if the needle holder firmly engages. If it does not, put the needle holder on the first ratchet and gently tap it on a flat work surface (not the palm of your hand). If after three or four taps the ratchet holds, flip the instrument over and repeat the test. If the ratchet springs open during either test, the instrument should be sent out for repair.

Q: Why are there smooth jaw needle holders?

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

Q: Do all needle holder jaws wear out?

A: Yes. All makes and models of needle holder jaws do wear out over time.

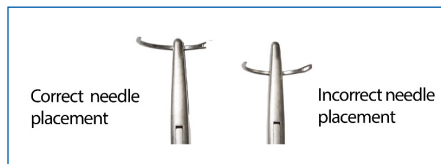


Q: What do gold handles on a needle holder indicate?

A: The gold color on some needle holder rings indicates that the jaws contain a metal called tungsten carbide. Tungsten carbide is much harder than stainless steel. It wears out more slowly and can be replaced.

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

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



Q: Can a standard non-gold-handled needle holder be rejawed?

A: No. A standard non-gold-handled German needle holder cannot be rejawed once the jaw wears out. It must be replaced. It is not repairable and not able to be replaced under warranty.


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

A: Yes. The majority have replaceable jaws that a repair vendor can replace on location.

Q: Does the gold on the rings wear off?

A: Yes. Over time, the gold will fade and wear off. It is only a “visual identifier” that the jaws contain tungsten carbide and does not affect the use of the needle holder.

Q: Why do needle holders crack in the neck?

A: Needle holders crack in the neck when a large needle is used in a small needle holder. Also, sometimes the needle holder is improperly used, like a pair of pliers to pull pins and twist wire. This type of crack is not repairable. 

Q Why can I not get ‘work completed’ reports from my repair vendor?

A Time to replace your repair vendor. They have the data to bill you, so it's just laziness to not be providing the ‘work completed’ reports.



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 IAHCSMM'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 IAHCSMM'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 IAHCSMM's annual conferences and conducts operating room personnel lectures across the country.