

Safety Tips

Using Scissors and Paper Cutters Safely



SCISSORS

We've all been using scissors since we were kids and think we know how to use them, but our familiarity with scissors sometimes makes us forget that they can be dangerous. Here are some tips to reduce and eliminate the hazards associated with scissors.

- Use the right size and type of scissors for the job. Using a scissors designed to cut a different material can dull the blades making it harder to cut.
- Only use scissors for the job they were intended – cutting. Do not use scissors as a hammer, screwdriver, pry bar or other type of tool.
- Never force a scissors to cut if you sense resistance. Do not try to cut too many pieces of paper at the same time or an object that is too thick or too hard. If you cannot cut easily through the material you are trying to cut, you may be using the wrong tool for that task.
- Scissors used for the cutting of food must be dedicated to only cutting food. Do not use them to cut food that is too hard or too thick. Clean scissors used for cutting food the same way you clean other food implements – with soap and water. Do not use chemical-based cleaners or disinfectants on food scissors.
- Check materials to be cut for staples, paperclips, etc. Cutting through metal or hard plastics may damage the cutting edges of the scissors, or worse, may strain your hand.
- Do not use the scissors if its blades are dull, bent, chipped, loose, or otherwise damaged, or if the handles are broken or loose.
- Use only single hand pressure for cutting. Never use excessive force, palm hammering, or the use of two hands to get extra pressure on the cutting edges. If you are resorting to such techniques, you are using too small of a scissors.
- Unless you are using blunt edged or round edged scissors, remember the tips are sharp and pose a potential puncture hazard. Keep your hands and fingers behind the cutting edge and away from the blades while you are using the scissors. Never cut towards yourself.
- Avoid putting scissors in a place where they may be knocked off the work surface and fall to the floor where they can cut, puncture, or trip a person.
- Do not leave scissors lying around or with the blades open. Keep them out of reach of children. When scissors are not in use, store them in a safe place; such as in a closed drawer or cabinet, not in a holder on the teacher's desk.
- Pass scissors to others handle first and blades pointing down; or set them down on a solid level surface and let the other person pick them up.
- Always handle and walk with scissors so that the blades are pointing down towards the floor. Do not carry scissors in your pockets. **Never run or allow horseplay with scissors.**

Always handle scissors with care. They may be an everyday item, but they have sharp blades that are designed to cut paper and other materials. So remember, they can cut you too.

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PAPER CUTTERS

People in schools and offices typically use scissors to cut paper. However, if you cut a lot of paper frequently or want straight, clean edges that prove difficult to accomplish with manual scissors, then a tabletop paper cutter can be a very useful tool. Using a paper cutter may seem ordinary, but working with one safely is essential to avoid cutting yourself, or even worse – severing a finger. Here are some guidelines for safe paper cutter use:

- Choose a paper cutter that is designed for whatever you need to cut, for instance, thin paper or cardstock.
- Read the instruction manual for the paper cutter before using it. Follow the manufacturer's directions on how to use and care for it.
- Only use the paper cutter on a level, flat, sturdy, brightly lit surface in an area that is away from other distractions.
- If you have to move the paper cutter, lift it by the base, not by the cutting blade handle. Lock the blade in the down position with the blade safety latch before moving it and whenever the paper cutter is not in use.
- Keep hands, fingers and clothing clear of the paper cutter blade at all times.
- Check to ensure that the finger guard is in place before using the paper cutter and do not remove it. The finger guard is the most important safety feature available on paper cutters. While it may be a little obtrusive, working without fingers is far more troublesome. If the finger guard is missing, do not use the cutter until the guard is replaced. If necessary, contact the manufacturer to find out about replacing the guard.
- Make sure your paper cutter has a tension spring attached to the back of the blade. This will prevent the blade from rushing down when the handle is released.
- Do not put more than the maximum number of pages or paper thickness recommended by the manufacturer on the cutter to ensure you get a clean cut without rough edges. In addition, never use a paper cutter on objects other than paper, such as plastic, fabric or metal.
- In general, paper cutters should not be used by students. However, if allowed; only responsible, older students who are trained and supervised may use paper cutters.
- Paper cutters should be put away when not in use or kept in areas like the main office, staff lounge or supply room - where students do not have access.



To maintain your paper cutter:

- Keep your paper cutter clean.
- Do not cut paper with wet glue or paint on it that might ooze onto the cutter blades or bed.
- Wipe the paper cutter periodically with a damp cloth. Apply a few drops of approved oil on the hinge and spring mechanisms to keep them working smoothly. Replace the non-slip feet, if they become dislodged from the bottom of the paper cutter.
- If the blades of your paper cutter become very dull, nicked or damaged, you must replace them with new blades. Contact the manufacturer for the correct replacement blades.

The biggest single factor in paper cutter safety is the user. There is simply no substitute for good common sense. A paper cutter is a wonderful tool because of the sharp blade and ability to easily cut through more than one piece of paper. However, for the very same reasons it is a good tool, it is a dangerous one. Always exercise caution when using a paper cutter.

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