SCISSOR MALL

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TOOLS OF THE TRADE: SHEARS

Hair-cutting tools are the tools that you will use most often in your professional career. They should be purchased with care and they should reflect the high-quality work that you do.

METAL FACTS:

1) ***STEEL***: **All** hair cutting shears are made with STAINLESS STEEL that is manufactured in either Japan, Korea, Germany, China, India or Pakistan. The steel made in Japan is regarded as the best scissor steel in the world. Korean and Chinese steels are good, but tend to be a little softer metal and do not hold an edge as well as Japanese steels. German steel is very hard steel, usually too hard to sharpen to a razor edge. Pakistani and Indian steels are the poorest quality and do not sharpen or hold an edge well.

The process of making good scissor steel is the result of an exact recipe in which several ores, alloys and elements are combined in a well-balanced mixture that gives you just the right cutting tool. CARBON is the principal hardener in steel. The more carbon that is added, the harder it gets. Carbon content should be between .95 and 1.2% of the finished steel. A steel that is too hard will not perform well for slide or dry cutting. MOLYBDENUM adds toughness and increases corrosion resistance to chemicals that can cause pitting and dulling. MANGANESE contributes to the tensile strength of the blade, so that it will retain its edge longer. CHROMIUM protects against corrosion and also adds heat resistance so that the steel will maintain its desired properties during forging and finishing. VANADIUM adds toughness and fatigue resistance so that the scissor will maintain its set and balance. COBALT and TITANIUM are also added to some steels to increase hardness and decrease weight, and adding these alloys will result in the finest scissor steel. Keep in mind, however, that COBALT and TITANIUM are only additives to stainless steel, **NO** scissor is made of 100% cobalt or titanium or any other alloy. That would be like trying to make a chocolate cake out of nothing but cocoa powder.

Good quality stainless steels are divided into categories depending on the alloys used in their production. Good stainless steel categories range from 440A to 440C, S-1 to S-3 (also called “Silver”) Tooling Steels, the “V” steels (ranging from “V-1” to “V-10 Gold”), to one of the highest grade of Japanese steel: Hitachi’s ATS-314. The ATS-314 steel is one of the finest, most expensive scissor steel in the world. There are a few other steels, such as boutique steels,

that also can be exceptional steels. ***Super Gold 2 (SG-2)*** is a new scissor category of stainless steel that uses a powder metallurgy technology that "atomizes" molten steel to form very tiny grains that are uniformly distributed in a durable tempered base material (martensite). ***The resulting steel has greater flexibility, fatigue-resistance and wear-resistance than other steels. Blades have a uniform hardness and they can be sharpened and polished with ease, and will maintain their edge longer than other stainless steels.***

When purchasing your shears, you will get the best cut from a shear made with Japanese 440C, or higher grade, stainless steel. All categories above the 440 grade are considered "Cobalted" steels.

2) ***MANUFACTURE***: HOW a scissor is made is also of vital importance. The best scissors are HAND-FORGED as opposed to CAST or STAMPED shears. Stamped shears are the most inexpensive and are not usually hollow-ground. They are not as sharp and have a lot of drag on the blade. Many shears now made in Taiwan or China are CAST shears that are digitally finished. The tempering (hardening) process on cast scissors does not produce a shear that will hold an edge as long as a forged shear, but that should be reflected in a lower price. Also, hand-forged shears can have a much sharper edge, depending on the craftsman making the shear, but the digital finishing produces a uniformly consistent mid-range scissor. Any scissor you purchase should have uniform hollow-grinding (CONCAVE) on the inner surface of the blade and a narrow but consistent "ride line" along the cutting edge. Most stylists prefer a CONVEX (Hamaguri or Clamshell) edge. However, if the steel in your shear is of superior quality and the blade was designed originally with a beveled edge, that is the edge it should always have.

In general, shiny-surfaced shears resist corrosion and pitting better than satin-finished scissors.

Many shears now come in colors and can be referred to as "Titanium" scissors. It is important to be aware that this does ***not*** mean that the scissors are made from Titanium, but that the color is a Titanium coating and therefore will not chip or peel off. The Titanium used to color the scissor ***will not make it any sharper nor will it make the edge last longer.*** It just produces a pretty surface that is very long-lasting.

Stylists need to remember that STAINLESS STEEL is not stain PROOF steel. All shears must be kept clean and dry to prevent rusting, pitting and dulling. It is also important to note that there is **No such thing as a scissor that NEVER needs to be sharpened. ALL scissors must be sharpened when they get dull or are nicked.**

3***) USABILITY***: The most important thing that you should look for in a shear after you have established what quality of shear you wish to purchase, is how it

FEELS, not just in your hand, but how it feels to your WHOLE BODY. The wrong shear can contribute to CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME, TENDONITIS, BURSITIS, ROTATOR CUP, and other hand, arm, shoulder, neck and back problems. The right shear can prevent, or even cure, these problems. The factors that will make it a good shear for you are: WEIGHT, LENGTH, BALANCE and HANDLE CONFIGUATION.

A**) WEIGHT**: There are hundreds of different styles on the market and one way in which they differ is weight. Some people like a heavy shear, most stylists prefer a lighter scissor. Be aware of your preference and make sure that the weight of the scissor is comfortable and that you have a feeling of control all the way to the tip of the blade.

B) **LENGTH**: Most scissors range in length from 4.5" to 8". To choose a basic cutting tool, you should measure the length of the blade against your middle finger, and the overall length of the scissor against the extended palm of your hand. Most women are more comfortable working with a 5.5" or 6" scissor, while most men prefer a 6" or 6.5" shear. Longer shears, such as 6.5" to 8" scissors are good for scissor over comb work and longer styles. Thinning/blending and texturizing shears can save time and produce more uniform results when softening "lines" and "corners", feathering, thinning bulk, adding volume or doing the "fractured" or more "textured" styles. Our double teeth thinners do not leave a line in the hair and are miracle workers and time savers for stylists, barbers, and groomers.

C) **BALANCE**: A shear should feel well-balanced in your hand. That means that neither the handle nor the blade should feel too heavy when you are cutting with the scissor. You don't want to feel that you are working to hold the tip of the blade level with the cutting surface, or your hand will become easily fatigued.

D**) HANDLE CONFIGURATION**: Handle configuration is probably one of the biggest considerations when choosing a new shear. OPPOSING or STRAIGHT handled shears put the most strain on the hand, wrist, arm, shoulder, neck and back. OFF-SET and CRANE-HANDLE shears put less strain on the body and are usually a better choice. Shears that have a bent-down thumb-ring and spacing between the thumb and finger-rings are also more comfortable. For stylists with mild or severe problems, SWIVEL-THUMB shears can be an enormous help. Also, use FINGER INSERTS so that your scissors will fit your fingers and thumb. The holes on a scissor handle should not be sloppy and should not go past your knuckle, especially on your thumb. A poor fit will put more strain on your hand and dull your scissors more quickly.

MAINTENANCE: You will probably be investing between $150 to $500 per shear. That is an investment that should be protected.

Shears should be CLEANED at the end of each day, before they are put in their case for the night. And if you are cutting permed hair, colored hair or hair impregnated with chlorine, you should wipe down the blades with alcohol and dry them after the cut. These chemicals can dull your blades. Hair and dirt left on scissors can cause rusting and pitting. At least once a week, you should OIL your scissors at the pivot point. Clipper blade oil is fine for this. It is best to store your scissors in a CASE whenever they are not in your hands. This will prevent customers and other stylists from "borrowing" your scissors to do things like cut out recipes and cut off the tops of perm bottles.
We recommend having any shears that you use on a regular basis serviced at least once a year. They need to be cleaned, set and balanced, even if they are still sharp.

ALWAYS use a qualified sharpener, whose work you have seen**.** A hack can **RUIN** your expensive scissors.

IF YOU CHOOSE YOUR SHEARS CAREFULLY AND CARE FOR THEM PROPERLY, THEY WILL SERVE YOU IN COMFORT FOR MANY YEARS.

BE SURE TO ASK QUESTIONS AND LEARN ALL YOU CAN ABOUT THE COMPANY YOU BUY SHEARS FROM.

* ***ANY GOOD SHEAR*** SHOULD HAVE A LIFETIME WARRANTY AGAINST MANUFACTURERS DEFECTS.

* ***ANY GOOD COMPANY*** SHOULD BE ABLE TO TELL YOU HOW THEIR SHEARS ARE MADE, WHERE THEY WERE MADE AND WHAT KIND OF STEEL THEY WERE MADE WITH.

*__***ANY GOOD COMPANY***__ SHOULD DEAL QUICKLY AND FAIRLY WITH ANY PROBLEMS OR CONCERNS YOU MAY HAVE ABOUT YOUR SHEARS.