

Shear Maintenance (Part I)

Educating yourself to know how to take care of your shears is just as important as knowing how to cut hair or apply color. Beauty school teaches you about the ins and outs of hair; but what about your shears? If your shears are not sharp enough, broken, have the wrong tension, etc., you could potentially damage or make mistakes on your client's hair. After much research, I found a website that explains the best way to maintain your shears. Don't be afraid to do more research. The information is out there, but here is something to get you started.

The following websites have some great information and are a great place to start:

<https://www.senseishears.com/shear-education-booklet-online-shear-maintenance>

http://www.precisionsharpener.net/proper_care_adjustment_of_scissors

<https://www.washiscissor.com/shear-knowledge/#Maintenance>

<http://www.radicaledge.co.za/scissor-care.php>

1. Oil your shears at least once a day and more often if you prefer.

At the end of every day, wipe down your shears to remove any hair and residue and product. Apply a drop or two of lightweight oil to the pivot area with the blades open. Open and close them with your regular cutting motion, blades pointed down, to allow the oil to flush out the area under the tension screw and to run down the blades. Wipe off excess oil with your towel, close the scissor and put it away for the night. This way, your shears will be clean, lubricated and ready for the next day, instead of sitting overnight with moisture and residue from your last haircut on the blades which can rust and damage your shears. Use only scissor oil for lubrication.

2. Check, and if need be, adjust your tension at least once a week.

To check tension, first clean and oil the shear as described. Holding the finger side of the shear in your left hand, lift the thumb handle with your right hand until the blades are fully open and let it go. If it stays open all the way, or does not fall more than 20% of the way closed, the tension is good. If the blade falls more than 20% of the way closed, it is too loose. Tighten the tension system by turning the knob or screw slightly to the right (clockwise). On shears with clicking knobs or screws, one or two clicks are usually enough. Test again, and if it does not fall, then test to make sure it is not too tight. Too tight is just when you feel too much resistance as you open them. You don't want to have to fight the tension with your thumb to open and close the blades. Be cautious not to over tighten or over loosen the adjuster as this could damage the shear. Adjust the screw one click (adjuster type) or 16th turn at a time until properly adjusted.

Note: When shears bend the hair between the blades, or pull as you draw them away from the client, it almost always means the tension is too loose. New shears also need adjustment, usually after the first few uses. During the first few haircuts with a new shear, the washer between the screw and the shear, will compress and form itself to the shape of the screw hole. This will leave the tension too loose. An initial adjustment of the tension will take up the space left after this compression and the tension should then not need further adjustment for some time. Don't be afraid to adjust the tension on your new shears, it will make them work better.

3. Sharpen your shears with the manufacturer's recommended service center only.

There are many people who will come to salons claiming to know how to sharpen shears. The problem is there is no regulated certification for sharpeners, so anyone can make that claim. The reality is very few people know how to recreate the edge on a high quality shear. The typical

sharpener will use too coarse an abrasive, removing too much metal and leaving the edge cutting rough. They might then over-polish it to make it smooth, but this will leave it incapable of cutting cleanly. They will often alter the angle of the edge which will change the way the shear cuts. Some will ruin the shear in ways that even the manufacturer's service center cannot repair.

I am going to take this one step further to say that you don't have to use the "manufacturers recommended service center only." I'm sure that is part of the website to market their service. For our purposes, you should get your shears sharpened by a professional sharpener who knows the ins and outs of your shears. Fortunately, The Blade Doctor knows how to **BRING YOUR BLADES BACK TO LIFE!**

Do's & Don'ts

Do:

- Clean, dry and oil your scissors at the end of every day of use.
- Check your scissors for adjustment, at least once each day of use.
- Handle your scissors with gentle care.
- Protect the cutting edges from touching anything except human hair.
- Record all identifying marks and any serial numbers, in case your scissors are stolen or lost (a digital close-up photograph will be handy).
- Store and transport your scissors in padded cases or pouches and make sure the blades are closed in order to protect the cutting surface!
- Always keep your scissors closed except when cutting hair, never place them on a bench with the blades open, as this can nick the edges.
- Have them professionally sharpened regularly - at least every 6 months.

Don't:

- Don't let your scissors run out of adjustment.
- Don't let your scissors corrode or get dirty.
- Don't cut anything except hair with them.
- Don't drop or toss your scissors when putting them down.
- Don't lend your scissors out. Other people have different hands to you - someone else using your scissors with a hard hand will alter the scissors balance and make them feel different after one haircut! (They don't care for them as much as you do and might even damage them!)
- Don't "pressure cut" (torque the blades together). This means squeezing harder with your thumb when the scissors start to go dull. it will cause excess wear on the scissors if you do so.
- Don't allow your scissors to come into contact with any comb, sterilizing solution, or any perm or color or other chemicals, as they will cause corrosion and rusting (pitting!).