WORK SHARP®

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Outdoors55

USER'S GUIDE FOR THE

OD55 SERIES

DUAL-GRIT DIAMOND SHARPENING STONE

WSBCHODS

WATCH DEMO

LEARN MORE FROM ALEX

⚠ **WARNING!** To reduce the risk of injury, the user must read and understand this instruction manual before using product. Failure to follow this warning could result in severe injury or death. Save these instructions for future reference.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLEASE LEAVE A REVIEW ON AMAZON, WORKSHARPTOOLS.COM OR WHEREVER YOU PURCHASED YOUR PRODUCT

SAFETY INFORMATION

⚠ ***WARNING!*** ***You will be creating incredibly sharp knives with this sharpener. Always keep your fingers, hands, and body clear of the knife edge. Failure to follow these warnings could result in severe injury or death.***

⚠ ***WARNING!*** ***Do not use excessive pressure when drawing the blade towards yourself. Use light pressure or you risk severe injury or death.***

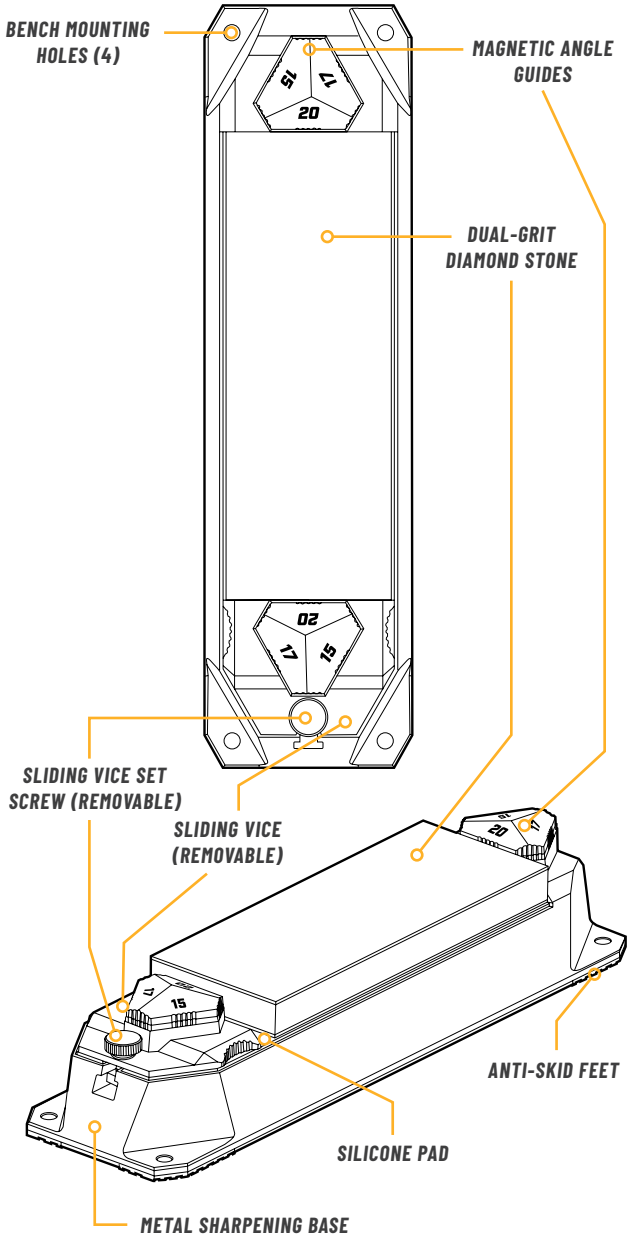
⚠ ***WARNING!*** ***To minimize the risk of injury, always use proper eye and respiratory protection. Failure to follow this warning could result in severe injury or death.***

SAVE THESE INSTRUCTIONS

WARRANTY

This sharpener is covered by Work Sharp's 3-year warranty. We stand behind and support our products – contact us if you need assistance, parts, or service. Warranty for consumer not industrial or commercial use, excludes abrasives.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR DUAL STONE SHARPENER



STONE SPECIFICATIONS

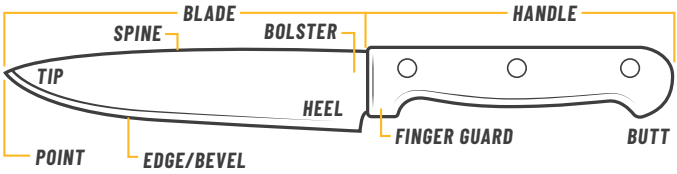
Stone Length: 8 in / 203 mm
Stone Width: 3 in / 76 mm
Stone Thickness: 0.72 in
Stone Base Material: Cast aluminum
Coarse Side: 320 grit
Coarse Micron: 45 Micron
Fine Side: 1200 grit
Fine Micron: 8 Micron
Diamond Type: Mixture of Polycrystalline and Monocrystalline
Flatness Tolerance: ±0.005 in (0.05 mm)

PRODUCT SPECIFICATIONS

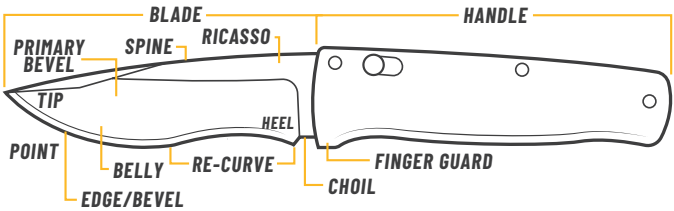
Stone Compatibility:
Using the Sliding Vise: Clampable length 7.5–8.75″
Without the Sliding Vise: Up to 4″×12″
Overall Base Dimensions: 3.76″ × 13.75″
Angle Guides: Magnetic Guide in 15°, 17° and 20°
Weight: Base 1.5 lbs / Stone 3.5 lbs

KNOW YOUR KNIFE TERMS

KITCHEN KNIFE



OUTDOOR KNIFE



SHARPENING WITH INTENTION

Knife sharpening is one of those skills that can look simple from the outside but feel impossible once you try it yourself.

This guide was built around one idea: How would sharpening expert Alex Garland teach someone to sharpen? When you know why and how something works, you stop guessing and start reading the knife blade to adjust based on what you see.

By the end of 101, you'll sharpen a knife from start to finish and understand why every step worked. By the end of 201, you'll have the fundamentals to consider going further on your own with confidence.

USER GUIDE 101 — FUNDAMENTALS OF SHARPENING

101 follows a real sharpening session from the moment you pick up the knife to the moment you put it down. Every step connects to the one before it.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Before you pick up a knife, there are a few things worth understanding.

ANGLE CONSISTENCY IS EVERYTHING

The most important thing for freehand sharpening is to maintain a consistent angle throughout the sharpening process. If the chosen angle isn't consistent, your knife may never become sharp. If the angle is always changing — too high, too low — you will essentially be dulling your knife at the same time as sharpening. Whatever angle is chosen, maintaining that angle is the MOST IMPORTANT thing for the rest of the sharpening process to work properly.

COMFORT >> CONFIDENCE >> SUCCESS

How to achieve it:

LOCK YOUR WRIST

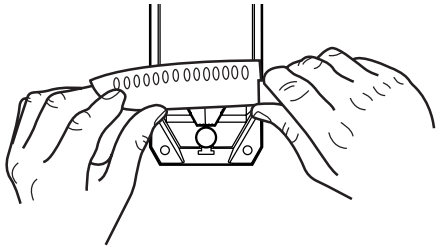
Locking the wrist and all small muscle groups removes compounding error. We are only worried about moving a knife in one direction. It's not a big compound complex movement. Practice the sharpening stroke in one direction and slowly. Speed will come with practice. It's more important to practice a little bit ***PERFECTLY***, than a large amount, ***IMPERFECTLY***.

BE A ROBOT — 2D MOTION

Maintaining an angle is not hard once you get the right muscle memory, eliminating as much unnecessary movement as possible. Think robot dance. The sharpening movement can come from moving your elbow, or you can keep your elbow locked and move your torso. Just do not twist or move your wrist in any way. Think of large muscle movements, not small ones.

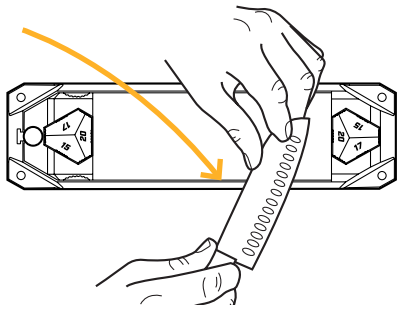
THUMB ON SPINE

The thumb acts as an angle reference, and another contact point during the sharpening stroke on your knife. Your other hand — the one not holding the knife — has to go somewhere, so use the thumb on the spine to help lock in your angle and provide a traveling reference point along the stone on the forward stroke. Keep that thumb light — resting on the spine, not pressing down into the stone.



STAY COMFORTABLE

Position the stone so that it's comfortable to you and matches the way you move. As long as the wrists are locked, it doesn't matter what direction the stone faces. If you are struggling, take a break and go back to basics — lock the wrist, steady movement.



This takes time and practice. You will struggle at times. That's part of it. Stick with it — comfort leads to confidence, and confidence leads to success. We'll help you get there.

LIGHT PRESSURE

In the beginning of your sharpening journey, use light pressure. More pressure means less control until you become used to the correct movements, light pressure will give you much more feedback.

1 SETUP

STONE POSITION

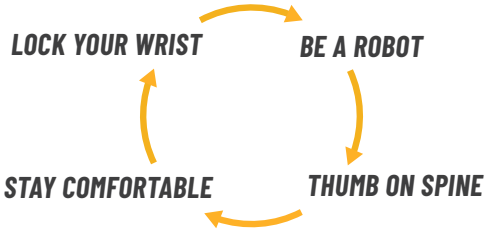
Position the stone wherever it feels natural. The only test: can you keep your wrists locked through both stroke directions? If yes, you're set.

BODY POSITION

We recommend standing, it's much easier to rotate at your torso, keeping wrists locked. However, you can stand or sit, if your shoulders are relaxed, and your arms can move freely.

Once you make a single pass (on the next step), if something feels awkward adjust your body position or the stone accordingly until you find yourself making a comfortable full stroke.

Note: If you're struggling at any point, revisit the four fundamentals in Before You Begin above.



Set up and comfortable? Now choose your knife.

2 CHOOSE YOUR KNIFE

Start with a non-serrated, double bevel kitchen knife with a 3–4" blade that's already reasonably sharp.

Not your favorite knife — something you use and know could be sharper. A thinner kitchen-style blade is ideal for learning the fundamentals.

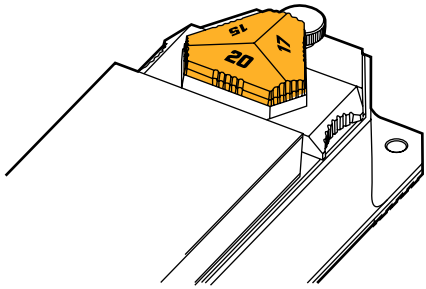
WHY START WITH A MODERATELY SHARP KNIFE?

A knife that's close to sharp shows you the results faster. You'll feel the improvement within the first session — that early win is what builds the feedback loop you need to keep improving.

3 PREPARE YOUR ANGLE GUIDE AND STONE

If you already know your angle and how to stroke, go to Step 5 and set the 320 grit facing up.

If you don't know your angle, start with the angle guide set at 20° and the 1200 grit diamond facing up, and follow along.

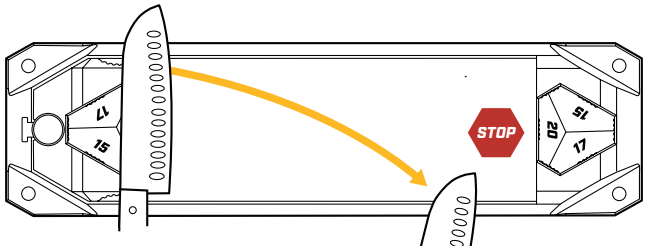


4 THE STROKE

Start with an edge leading stroke — the knife moving across the stone, edge first.

Wrist locked, thumb on the spine, heel of the knife on the stone at 20° guide. That's your starting position on every stroke.

FOLLOW THE CURVE OF THE BLADE



The sharpening movement can come from moving your elbow, or keeping your elbow locked and moving your torso. Do not twist or move your wrist in any way. Follow the curvature of the blade by lifting your elbow as the knife moves along the stone. Think large muscle movements, not small ones.

Use firm but not heavy pressure. It should feel like the abrasive is working.

Ready to get feedback on your stroke? Let's start with the Marker trick.

THE MARKER TRICK

WHAT'S THE GOAL?

Develop a consistent stroke before you move on to sharpen with an aggressive grit. You are looking for removal of the Marker to show you where you may be inconsistent in your angle during the stroke; this trick is the quintessential "canary in the coal-mine", or confidence test you may still use even at a master level.

THE PROCESS:

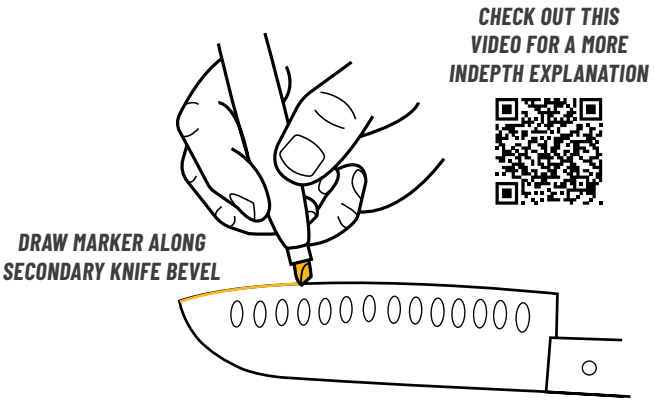
On each side of the knife, mark the entire length of your secondary bevel from tip to heel, Place the spine of the knife on the 20° guide, wrist locked, off-hand thumb on the spine, and make a couple of light passes, edge leading. Mark with the marker as necessary to continue reading the knife and adjusting your stroke, it is not necessary to mark after ever stroke.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

Color in the secondary bevel with a marker. Place the knife on the 1200 at 20° and take a stroke. Check both sides — you will likely see a difference between them. Pay attention to that difference. Building awareness of where to improve is how you develop consistent muscle memory as a sharpener.

The goal is full marker removal across the secondary bevel, heel to tip on both sides. Pay close attention here — this is where you may notice you're missing the tip or heel entirely. If removal is uneven, adjust your spine height slightly, make sure your wrist isn't raising or dropping mid-stroke, and ensure you're completing a full stroke to reach the tip. If marker remains above or below the bevel after consistent heel-to-tip removal, adjust your guide angle — not your technique.

Note: Many factory edges have a variable angle from heel to tip. If you see inconsistent marker removal despite solid technique, that can be a common experience — not a reflection of your skill. We cover this in Step 6.



WHEN TO MOVE ON?

Consistent heel to tip marker removal — you've done something most people don't learn, reading the knife. When it feels comfortable and confident, flip to the 320 grit and move to Step 5.

5 BEGIN SHARPENING

START WITH 10 STROKES ON ONE SIDE OF THE KNIFE ON THE 320:

Stop and look at the bevel. Check that the stone is removing material consistently from tip to heel and the bevel looks clean top to bottom. Alternate sides before moving on. If the removal looks uneven, make small adjustments to your angle before continuing. When your angle has been confirmed, start sharpening.

6 CREATE THE BURR

Creating and detecting the burr is the second most important thing when freehand sharpening. You can't create a burr without maintaining a consistent angle.

A burr is a small piece of folded over metal that forms when the two secondary bevels meet at a perfect point (the apex). It gives you a visual and tactile confirmation that you've apexed — sharpened to an exact point along the edge. Without it, you have a hard time knowing when to stop.

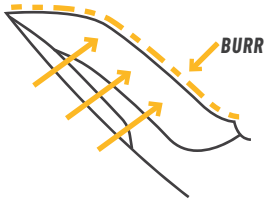
START WITH 10 STROKES ON ONE SIDE

Begin with around 10 strokes on side one, using the full length of your stroke. Then check for the burr.

HOW TO FIND IT

Two methods: visual and tactile. Sometimes you can simply see a small folded-over burr along the apex. Most times, use the pad of your finger — lightly brush it down and away from the edge on the opposite side from the one you just sharpened, from heel to tip. Feel both sides. One should feel smooth, the other should feel different if a burr is present. You're feeling for a catch or drag on the full length of the cutting edge.

Note: Another way to confirm a burr is the towel test — wipe a cotton towel across the edge. If threads collect on the edge, the burr is catching them.



CHECK FOR A BURR BY BRUSHING FINGERS ACROSS/AWAY FROM THE BLADE EDGE.

WANT MORE INFORMATION? CHECK OUT THIS VIDEO

MISSING BURR SECTION ON KNIFE?

You can have a burr along some portions of the blade and not others, so check the full length. This is typically from a more dull portion of the blade, where you use it the most. If there are spots with no catch, go back to the stone and make more full strokes until it shows from tip to heel.

A knife with a proper burr should feel sharp.

SOFTER VS HARDER STEELS

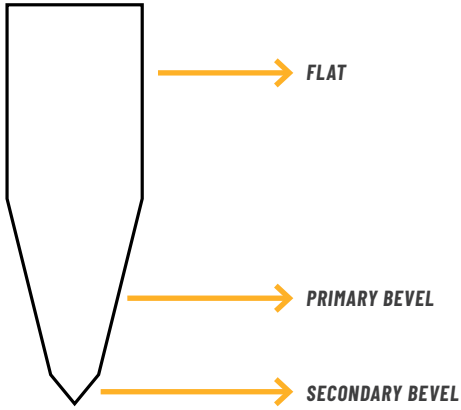
On most modern steels the burr will feel very similar. However, certain steels at lower hardness levels will produce softer, more paper-like burrs that are difficult to remove and may require different techniques or more refinement. Sometimes stropping at the end can remove the last bit of a stubborn burr.

Note: Another option for a stubborn burr — run the knife gently through the edge of a piece of wood (like you're trying to cut it, but adding no pressure other than the weight of the knife). A 2x4 works.

This can break off the remaining burr before your final strop passes.

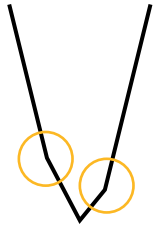
7 CHECK THE SECONDARY BEVEL

Keep the sharpened bevel even on both sides of the knife. Even bevels keep the apex (cutting edge) in line with the blade centerline — this keeps the bevel geometry correct.



IF ONE SIDE IS LARGER

Start with the smallest bevel. If one bevel is significantly smaller, the entire sharpening process may need to becompleted on one side only until the bevels are even.



GROWING BEVEL TOWARD THE TIP

In some cases the sharpened bevel may grow larger toward the tip. This isn't always a bad thing. The added spine thickness and primary grind thickness will make the bevel grow larger toward the tip, even with a perfectly consistent angle.

Primary Bevels are not always perfect. Even the slightest unevenness can cause the sharpened secondary bevel to look off-center or different sizes. Recognize when the primary bevel is the issue — it reduces the headache of trying to figure out why the bevel angles aren't even.

8 FLIP SIDES — MIRROR THE PROCESS

Repeat the same process on the other side of the knife. Same angle, same stroke, this will remove the existing burr and create a new burr, followed by a height bevel check.

Once you're able to detect a burr, and both sides match in bevel height, you're ready for the grit transition.

9 GRIT TRANSITION — FLIP TO 1200

The trick is to do all of the work on the coarsest grit. You can remove a ton of material with a coarse grit diamond stone, apex the edge, and then move on to the finer grit. Don't move on until you're fully apexed on the coarsest stone. The knife should feel sharp off the coarsest grit. You only want to refine the scratch pattern with a finer grit.

You've done the work on the 320. Flip the stone to the 1200.

The 1200 refines the scratch pattern and brings the apex to its final form. It's not removing much material — it's refining the burr and apex. Lighten your pressure here. Too much pressure on the 1200 will recreate the burr you just worked to refine. Let the stone do the work.

10 REFINE THE EDGE

Take 10 strokes on one side of the knife on the 1200. Look for the scratch pattern to change — finer and more uniform across the full length of the bevel. Repeat on the other side of the knife.

Once both sides are refined, alternate one stroke per side — just the weight of the knife, no added pressure — for 5 strokes each side. This folds the burr back and forth until it breaks off cleanly. You want a crisp, strong apex. A strop can finish the job if needed.

If you take appropriate grit steps, it should only take about 10 back and forth passes to refine the previous scratch pattern. But there's a catch — angle control has a lot more to do with how many passes you need than you might think. If you still see deep scratches after 10 passes, adjust slightly and do 10 more until all the previous scratches are gone. What you don't want to do is sit there and do a ton of passes at once without inspecting it. You're probably just working in one area and completely ignoring another. Use the marker trick to help narrow it down.

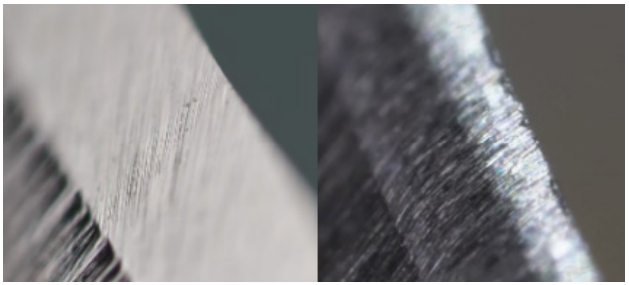
You've just sharpened a knife from start to finish and understood every step along the way. Angle, burr, grit, bevel — these aren't concepts anymore. They're things you've done. You read the knife, you built the edge, and you felt the difference. That's not nothing — most people never slow down enough to get here. Take that with you into 201. The fundamentals you built are yours now. What you do with them next is where it gets interesting.

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR "USER GUIDE 201 — MASTERY"

USER GUIDE 201 — MASTERY

The fundamentals don't go away in 201 — they go deeper. What changes is what you do when the situation asks something different of you. A knife that doesn't fit the guides. A steel that behaves differently than expected. An edge that needs a different geometry for a specific task. This is where Alex's years of experience become the guide — not rules, but judgment. The ability to read what's in front of you and know what to do next. That's what 201 is about.

What may still feel sharp isn't always the gold standard. On the right — what an incomplete edge looks like up close, even when it feels sharp in hand. On the left — what you're working toward in 201. A fully cleaned secondary bevel, a consistent striation pattern, a true apex.



11 STROKE TYPES

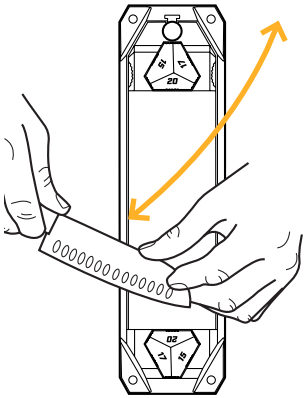
Generally, beginning sharpeners should use forward passes on the stone. This cements good habits and allows perfect practicing.

As you get more comfortable, you can start adding back-and-forth passes. It's a common problem to accidentally change angle when changing direction — only add these AFTER you're very comfortable locking everything in place and maintaining the angle.

The most important thing in freehand sharpening is maintaining a given angle. Any time you change direction, the odds of twisting the knife and changing the angle increase, which will dull the knife and cause the edge to round over.

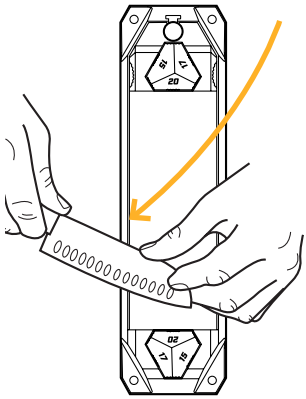
Circular strokes are not generally recommended due to the higher probability of changing angle.

MULTI DIRECTION PUSH & PULL



Push blade from top of stone to bottom, pull blade back from bottom to top. Mentain angle and no not lift blade from the sharpener stone.

SINGLE DIRECTION PUSH



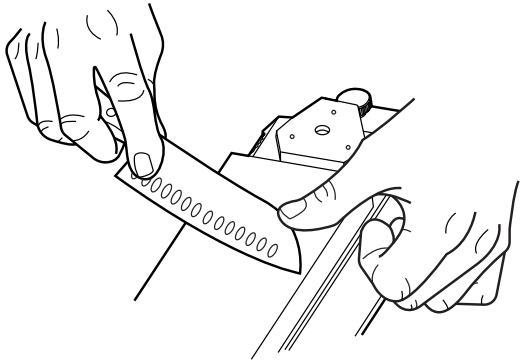
Push blade from top of stone to bottom. Lift blade and return to top starting position for each

12 REMOVE THE GUIDES — GO FREEHAND

The Angle Guides can be removed when you need an angle outside their range, or once you've developed muscle memory to hold your angle without them.

The angle still must be maintained on every pass. When you're consistently forming a burr with the

guides in place, you're ready to remove them if they are limiting your angle selection.



MATCHING FACTORY ANGLES

Here's the thing about factory angles, they don't have to be matched. The factory angle is simply whatever angle the manufacturer chose, and in a lot of cases, may vary degrees per side from hand sharpening. It may or may not be right for how you use the knife. Start at 20° as a default, use the marker trick (step 4) to see what the existing bevel tells you, and adjust from there if you want. Choose an angle that makes sense for the knife and the task. That's all there is to it.

CHANGING FACTORY ANGLES

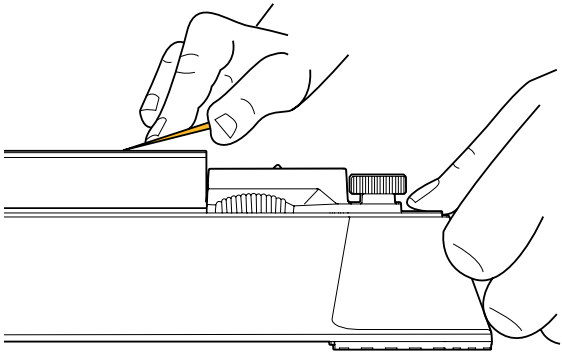
The factory angle may not always be best depending on what you're cutting, how you use the knife, or how you want to manage edge maintenance.

A more acute angle gives better slicing, but decreases edge retention and toughness. A more obtuse angle increases edge retention and toughness but decreases slicing ability.

13 LOW ANGLE SHARPENING

Below 15°, the angle guides may not be helpful — at that point you're sharpening freehand. Know your angle, hold it, and let the edge performance tell you whether the steel can support it.

Lower angles also produce a higher bevel reveal — more surface area on the secondary bevel. That increased surface area means more material to remove, which slows the sharpening process.



14 USING OTHER STONES

The base accommodates stones with a clampable length of 7.5–8.75" using the sliding vise, and up to 4"×12" with it removed.

The silicone pad also allows the use of 1×6" stones from other Work Sharp systems or other systems. The pad is sticky enough to hold most sharpening stones securely — although the clamp and angle guides may not fit every stone geometry exactly.

15 STROPPING (NOT INCLUDED)

A strop is one of the best final burr removal and edge refinement tools available if you need it.

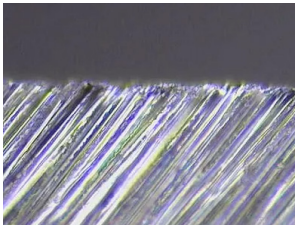
Around 10 passes per side with a quality diamond compound on a fine grain leather will remove remaining burrs and refine the apex.

16 TOOTHY VS REFINED EDGE

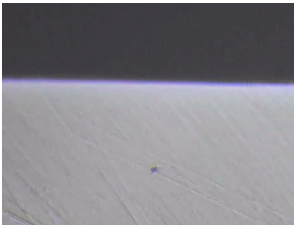
The grit you finish on determines the character of the edge.

A coarser finish — stopping at the 320 — leaves a toothy edge. More aggressive, better for cutting fibrous materials like rope, leather, and cardboard. Think of it as a micro saw at the apex.

A finer finish — refining on the 1200 and beyond — produces a smoother, more refined edge. Better for clean slicing, piercing soft materials, and tasks where push-cutting performance matters.



TOOTHY EDGE



REFINED EDGE

17 WHY TWO GRITS IS ENOUGH

Do all the work on the coarsest grit. Apex the edge there — the knife should feel sharp off the 320. The 1200 only refines the scratch pattern and minimizes the burr. You don't need anything in between for most knives and everyday cutting tasks.

The only reason to add more grits is if you want a higher level of refinement for a specific task or steel type. For most people, 320 to 1200 gives you everything you need. The grit you finish on is a choice, not a rule.

17 CLEANLINESS

Cross contamination of 320 grit to the 1200 grit stone can affect the scratch pattern and consistency of your sharpening.

Keep each stone and base clean, especially the silicone pad. You can clean the silicone pad with water and soap, clean the stones with a dry brush.

201 is the end of the guide, not the end of the learning. Every knife is different. Every steel teaches you something. The fundamentals you built in 101 are the constant — what you do with them from here is yours to figure out. That's the point.

CONGRATS — you've officially completed Sharpening 101 and 201. You've built the fundamentals, leveled up your technique, and you're ready to keep your edges performing at their best. And here's the best part: the learning never stops. Subscribe to the Outdoors55 and Work Sharp YouTube channels for more tips, tutorials, and new ways to sharpen smarter, faster, and with more confidence—one edge at a time.

WORK SHARP®

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Outdoors55

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