

Student Handout: How to Maintain and Buy Shears

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1. Types of shears

“Scissor” versus “shears”: In the past, scissors 8 inches and over were called shears, but shears sounds fancier than scissors so most people call hair scissors shears today.

A. Cutting shears

- Cuts straight lines and blunt cuts, but can also be used to add texture to hair using techniques like slide cuts and point cuts
- There are no teeth. Both are regular blades
- Some have serration on one blade to hold the hair, but this causes the other blade to wear out faster because it does most of the work cutting

B. Texturizer shears

- Primarily used to add texture and movement to hair, but can also be used to cut hair with repeated use
- One or both blades have teeth
- These are the type of texturizer shears according to Shark Fin Shears. The names are inconsistent in the industry, so this is one company’s terminology:

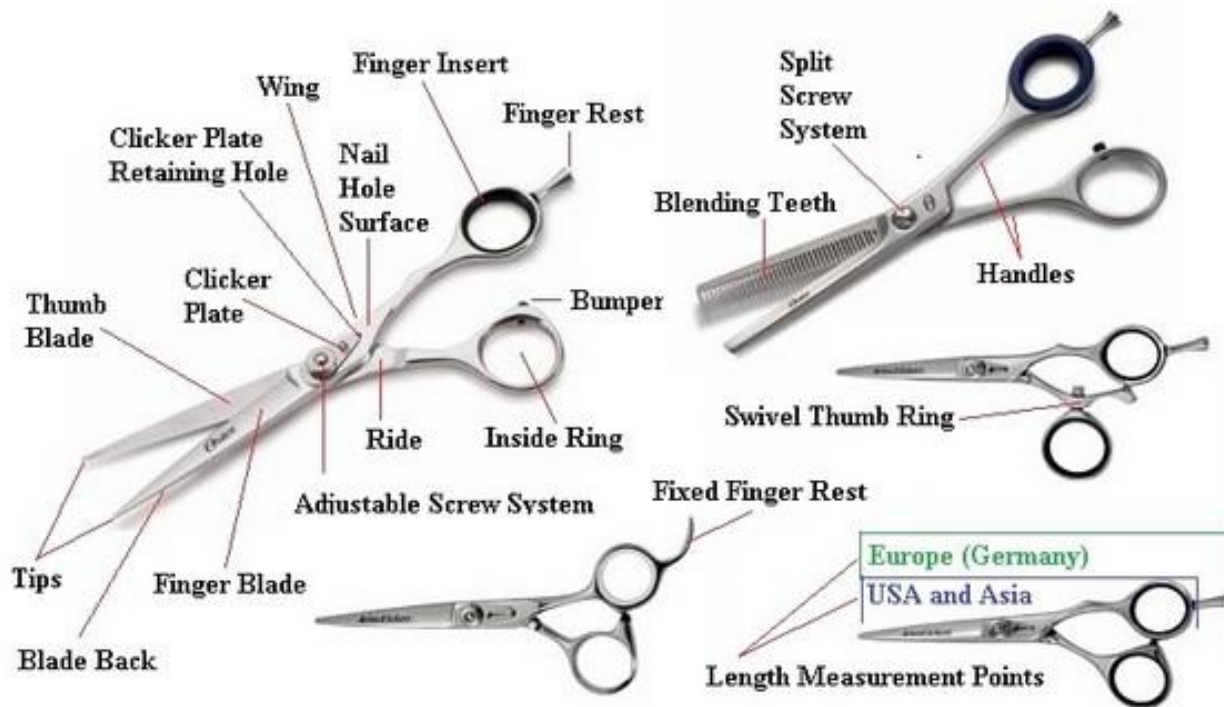
Here is the Shark Fin video on texturizer shears: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66-0b90vmgs>

Don’t just focus on how much hair is removed. Consider what the remaining hair is like.

Type of texturizer shears	Uses
Blending shears	Blend out lines with short hair, barbering, clipper cuts.
<i>Blends hair</i>	Remove bulk of hair but leave body and length and hair movement. It keeps the layers connected.
About 40 normal teeth	Thin fine hair because will leave the least-visual line. Can use for scissor over comb. Repeated uses acts like cutting shears.
Thinning Shears	Scissor over comb on people who don’t want clippers or short hair.

<p><i>Thins out hair</i></p> <p>About 30 narrow teeth</p>	<p>Medium length bobs for a textured, dispersed look at the ends, especially for thicker coarser hair.</p> <p>Medium to thick density hair and thick texture to remove hair more aggressively.</p> <p>De-bulk thick hair.</p> <p>Repeated uses acts like cutting shears.</p>
<p>Texturizing Shears</p> <p><i>Adds texture and movement</i></p> <p>About 15 wide teeth</p> <p>This is the most common kind of texturizer shears.</p>	<p>Yes, this has the same name as the name “texturizer shears” used to cover all the types. A little confusing but that’s ok.</p> <p>Creates a lot of movement and texture. The big gaps make the hair dance.</p> <p>Short hair layered inside long hair pushes it which gives movement side to side without having to do short layers.</p> <p>Finishing crops like texture pompadour chunks in the front shags, mullets</p> <p>Medium textured hair without creating volume at the crown.</p>
<p>Chunking shears</p> <p>About 7 wide teeth</p>	<p>Gives chunky appearance, heavy weight line (wide gaps).</p> <p>Massive texture and movement.</p> <p>Textured pixies.</p> <p>Textured mullets.</p> <p>Textured shag.</p> <p>On curly hair can use the first tooth to give release hair and movement.</p>
<p>No-line / double tooth shears</p> <p>Teeth are on <i>both</i> blades.</p> <p>Fast, leaves less line.</p>	<p>Does in one pass what the 40-tooth thinning shear does in 4 passes.</p> <p>Leaves almost no line.</p> <p>Good alternative to thinning razor.</p>

2. Scissor parts



Blade names	Has the finger rest/tang?	Has the cutting edge?	Moves?
Thumb blade, Cutting blade, Moving/moveable blade	No finger rest/tang	Yes, the thumb makes the cutting action	Yes, using your thumb, the strongest finger
(Ring) Finger blade, Stationary blade, Hook blade	Yes (that's why it is called a finger blade)	Yes, unless the blade is serrated , which makes the other blade do all the cutting	No, remains stationary as the cutting blade moves along it

A. Most important parts

Name	Example of what you can tell the sharpener
Finger blade and thumb blade	There is a nick on my finger blade
Bumper / Silencer	My bumper fell off so my shears click
Finger rest / Tang	My finger rest is loose an sometimes falls off
Screw	The screw won't tighten enough
Pivot	I can feel hair trapped in the pivot area

3. Things shears need to work right

- A sharp edge
- Have correct screw tension
- Can't be bent (must be aligned) – caused by dropping or waiting too long to sharpen
- Can't have lots of hair jammed in pivot, hair product on blades, or corrosion

4. How often should I sharpen?

There is no black and white answer. Since shears gradually lost their sharpness, it's a gray area as to when to sharpen them. Simple guideline: if they are bothering you because they are not performing as well as you want, sharpen them.

You change your car oil based on how much you drive your car. Don't sharpen automatically every few months, because sharpening requires that a little metal be removed, so unnecessary sharpening shortens their life. Test shears weekly and sharpen if they won't cut on the tip, fold hair, push hair, stress your hand, cause weird hair affects like curved cuts, have nicks, and make weird noises.

5. Shear maintenance

If you maintain them well, your shears can last many years, especially ones made with good metal and parts.

A. After every haircut

Disinfect, clean and oil the shears after every haircut

Shears that are always wet and dirty can rust. After every haircut, clean and oil the blades. Watch the "How to Lubricate Your Shears" video on the YouTube Shark Fin Shears channel <https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=wTfFgAKawzQ>

Disinfect and clean the shears:

1. Lay the shears on a towel and open them up in a wide X.
2. Spray the shears with state-approved disinfectant on both sides. Never dip shears in Barbicide or similar products that are mostly water or it may cause rust!
3. Let it sit for the amount of time specified on the disinfectant container to kill the bacteria and viruses.
4. Pick up the shears and wipe the handles.
5. Wipe the blade with a scissor chamois cloth or microfiber cloth. The cloths are easier on the edge than paper towels. If you need to use paper, the thick blue paper towels are safer. Pull the scissors using the **pinch and pull method** shown in the video. To keep from cutting your finger, keep the hand still that is **gently** holding the towel with very little pressure, while pulling the shears straight across.
6. To clean dried on product or weave glue, use nail polish remover.

Oil the shears:

7. Put a drop of oil on a Q-Tip or a thick paper towel. Best is scissor oil, camellia oil, or sewing machine oil. If you don't have those, use clipper oil or wax and oil lip balm.
8. Open the shears in a wide X.
9. Wipe oil on the U-shaped area near the screw.
10. If you are using a Q-Tip, wipe oil along the inside cutting edge of the blade.
11. If you are using a paper towel, wipe oil along the inside cutting edge of the blade by using the **pinch and pull method** shown in the video. **Gently** pinch the oiled paper on the inside edge of the blade, starting near the screw, then pull the shears straight out of the towel. If you want to be extra cautious, gently use tiny strokes of the towel away from the cutting edge.

B. Daily

One-second shear tension test




Watch the "Proper Blade Tension" video on the YouTube Shark Fin Shears channel https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=KsE_xGuvAzI

Loose shears won't cut right. They can push hair, fold hair, and tear the hair apart (think of a butterknife cutting a tomato!) You may think they need sharpening when they are just too loose.

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1. Hold the short handle ring
2. Lift the long handle ring
3. Drop the handle
4. Cutting shears should stay open 1-2 inches. Shears with teeth or with an additional ring with ball bearings around the screw head should stay open about an inch.
5. If too loose, it won't cut well. You may think it needs sharpening when it is just loose. Tighten the screw (to the right) a couple of clicks and test again. Small shears with light blades usually need to be tighter than long blades. Shears with bearings don't need to be as tight.
6. If too tight, will wear out the edge fast. Loosen to the left a couple of clicks and re-test.
7. If it won't tighten any more, wiggle both blades. If that fails to loosen it, call a sharpener and have them repair it. The click plate may be squashed or the washer is damaged or gone.

Type of screw tightener	What it is
Rubber pad	Cheap shears. No clicks
Clicker plate, Tension plate, Tension leaf	Makes discrete clicks as you adjust the screw. Click plate can be outside or inside the shear

Type of screw head	What it is	
Knob	Turn with your fingers	
Single slot	Like a normal screw. Can use a regular screwdriver	
Two tiny slots	Called a UFO screw. Use a scissor tightening key (a metal disk with bumps on the edge)	

Check for danger!

- Missing bumper
 - crosses and bends tip
 - exposes blade – cuts open finger
 - Tip: Temporarily wrap enough tape around the hole so that the blades do not cross
- Sharply pointed tips like daggers
 - Happens after years of sharpening or an untrained sharpener.
 - Have a sharpener round them off just enough.
- Nicks (tiny gouges)
 - You can feel a nick if you slowly close the shear and it catches a little.
 - Caused by dropping a shear or storing shears packed together where they hit each other's blades.
 - If you drop a shear and it is laying on the ground open, don't close the blades as you pick them up because there might be a nick that could damage the opposite blade. Carefully check for damage and make repairs. If you think there is no damage, be extra conservative: push the blades apart as you close them. When closed, push the blades together as you open them to push a hidden nick on the outside of the blade.

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- Using a nicked shear makes nicks larger.
- Sharpening a nicked shear takes off as much metal as multiple sharpenings so the shear's life is shortened a lot
- Thinning shear teeth hit the blade. Stop using, or the teeth will gouge a big nick in the blade. Gently separate the blades enough for you to close the shears and call a sharpener.

C. Once per week

Test the sharpness

Watch the "How Often Should I Sharpen My Shears" video on the YouTube Shark Fin Shears channel

<https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=sxNe4tnHbw8>

Don't automatically sharpen every few months. Test it weekly!

1. Cut wet Sanex neck paper (or single ply TP or Kleenex).
2. If it grabs, cut a wet pony tail
 - a. Wet hair shows the problems before dry hair.
 - b. A straight pony tail is best for testing, especially for thinning shears.
 - c. On tip see how much is pushed off the tip.
 - d. Mid-blade and look for curved cut and folding.

Clean hair out of the pivot screw area

1. Open the shears in a wide X.
2. Spray disinfectant on the pivot area.
3. Wipe the pivot area gently with a cloth to remove hair.
4. If needed,
 - a. Loosen the shears a couple of clicks
 - b. gently pull dental floss between the blades to pull out hair.
 - c. Tighten the shear screw back to where it was
5. Use a toothbrush to pull out stubborn hair if needed.

Oil the pivot screw area

1. Put a drop of oil on pivot area ride line (not in concave area!).
2. Open and close the shears.

Oil the swivel ring (if you have swivel shears)

1. If the swivel is not smooth, Put a drop of oil on the screw.
2. Rotate pivot.
3. Wipe off excess.

6. How to buy a shear

Watch the "How, What, Where" video on the YouTube Shark Fin Shears channel

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wadp_RI38w

Avoid regretting buying a shear. Always consider each of these factors.

A. Price

Price checklist

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Checked Off	Checklist Item
	Do I use scissors enough to be worth paying for anything beyond basic shears?
	Are higher-end shears appropriate for my current needs and current budget?
	Is the total price of the shear (including payments and interest) worth it?
	Am I putting most of my shear money in my primary shear?

B. How it is made: cast versus forged

Method	How it is made	Pros	Cons	Quality	Price	Where made
Cast	Liquid metal poured into a mold like chocolate into a candy bar mold. Test by looking for ledge near pivot.	Less likely to bend. Best for heavy use cutting. Hard metal, low price.	Can't easily bend back into shape. Has no steel grain so may break if bent and may have microscopic bubble flaws. Buy trusted brands only!	Low to Medium	Low	Taiwan China Pakistan
Forged	Heat a sheet of steel, stamp it, cool it " Hand-forged/ hand-welded " means high-quality blade is welded onto lower quality handle	Best for slide cutting and wet cutting Has steel grain. Denser, durable, longer-lasting, flexible (repair guy can bend back into shape).	Costs more than cast	High	Medium to high	Japan Korea China Taiwan

Bottom line for Stylists:

Checked Off	Checklist Item
	Will my budget allow me to buy mostly forged shears now?

C. What it is made of

Rockwell Hardness scale

Each metal type has a Rockwell Hardness, which is how the world measures how hard metals are.

HRC	Description	Edge retention	Toughness
HRC 56	Hair scissors should have a minimum of 56 RC to be a decent quality scissor	Higher	Lower
HRC 58	Forged cobalt tools		
HRC 62-63	Forged cobalt tools: 10% or less cobalt Japanese Hitachi ATS-314 Cobalt Alloy Stainless Steel	Lower	Higher

Types of steel

“Japanese steel” can just mean it follows a recipe for steel, not necessarily made in Japan.

Steel name	Steel quality	Time between sharpenings*	Rockwell hardness
Japanese 420C	Cheaper shears. Surgical Steel that won't break when dropped but gets dull faster than harder steel types	1-2 months	Mid 50s
Japanese 440C	Higher quality shears. Most hair cutting shears are 440C. It is very resistant to corrosion.	3-6 months	58-59
German steel	German steel hardness can vary. Ask the salesperson the Rockwell Hardness.	Up to 6 months	55-59
VG-10/V-10	Good wear resistance and rust resistance. Advantage of not becoming brittle over time, which is a major flaw normally associated with exceptionally hard steel. Good for dry and thick hair	6-8 months	60-61
ATS-314	Cobalt Alloy Stainless Steel (Rockwell Hardness of 62 – 63) Good for slide cuts, very thick hair, lots of dry hair	Up to a year	62-63

* **Time between sharpenings:** When used as your **primary shear** for an **average** amount of haircuts and dry cuts. Last less time between sharpening if shears are not maintained, dropped, nicked, rusting, and other abuse.

Bottom line for Stylists:

- 420C: shears you don't use often
- 440C: your primary shear when getting started or don't use shears a lot
- VG-10: your primary long-term shear for dry and thick hair

Checked Off	Checklist Item
	What kind of metal can I afford now (circle)? 440C, VG-10
	Can I justify harder metal because I do a lot of dry cuts, point cuts, slide cuts, handle thick hair, or require longer between sharpenings?

D. Where it is made

In today's international economy, shears are made like cars.

- Design can be any country.
- The steel and parts can be made anywhere.
- They can be assembled anywhere.

Most shears are made in China General rule: the higher the price, the more is done in Japan and Korea.

Bottom line for Stylists: trust the brand, don't focus too much on where it is “made” or you may spend too much.

Checked Off	Checklist Item
	Will my budget allow me to buy more expensive brand names now?

E. Beveled versus convex edge

Type	Definition	Pros	Cons
Bevel	A shiny, flat ledge appears along the edge.	Less likely to push. Longer time between sharpening Good for dry, unwashed hair	Less sharp. scissors with this type of blades have often been associated with work-related issues including strained muscles in the fingers and hands.
Convex	The curved edge goes all the way down to the edge. There is no shiny line.	Sharper smoother-cutting edge. Less effort to open and close shears. Healthier for the hair – less split ends.	Won't stay sharpened as long as beveled
Semi-convex	The convex has a bevel. Used especially for titanium colored shears		
Serrated edge	Jagged edge added to some or all of the blade, especially bevel	Prevents hair from sliding. It grabs the hair. For layering, tapering, and "shears over the comb"	The other blade does all the cutting work and wears down faster

Checked Off	Checklist Item
	Do I cut super thick dry, dirty hair that pushes a lot, so I need serration or a bevel?
	Am I more concerned about saving money on sharpening than a smoother cut easier on my hand?
	Do I care more about the color than how it feels?

F. Titanium Color

Watch the "Titanium V Stainless" video on the Youtube Shark Fin Shears channel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgaBI6qbSBE>

Titanium is just a colorful cosmetic coating. It doesn't make the shears harder. **They are all beveled** because the color would be ruined if sharpened like a full convex shear.

Checked Off	Checklist Item
	Are any of these true: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I care more about the color than how it feels • I want a longer time between sharpenings than I want a smooth cut • I have an allergy to nickel so I cannot touch stainless • My hands secrete an acid that damages stainless

G. Length of shear

Watch the "How to choose the right length shear" video on the YouTube Shark Fin Shears channel

<https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=bbHYcVAbg8>

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The length of blades to use will depend highly on your own personal preferences and styling techniques.

NOTE: if you measure the length of the shear with a ruler, do not count the finger rest.

Shear Length (does not include the finger rest)	Purpose
Less than 5.5 inches	Intricate cutting styles and when cutting hair close to the ears or skin, meticulous touch-ups
5.5 to 6 inches	Most common for primary shear Most women are more comfortable working with a 5" or 5.5" scissor, while most men prefer a 5.5" or longer shear.
Over 6 inches	"scissor over comb" cutting style, slide cutting, bobbed cuts, cutting on skin, thicker hair

How to choose your best length:

- Goal: have control without sacrificing comfort and balance.
- When a shear is too short, you tend to cut your knuckle (tip: wear a large ring on the middle finger of your left hand, or right hand for lefties). When a shear is too long you tend to cut in the web area between your fingers. Usually you will cut yourself more with a five-inch shear than one that is seven inches or longer. Use Liquid Bandage from Walgreens on cuts.
- Best method: Hold the shear and see if it is comfortable with your own way of cutting. Try the next higher one until it is not comfortable.
- Alternative: Lay the shear from your palm at on the base of your thumb and along your middle finger. The shear tip should be between the fingertip and knuckle.

Checked Off	Checklist Item
	What length feels best as my primary shear? Am I cutting my knuckle (choose a longer shear) or the webbing between my fingers (choose a shorter shear)

H. Swivel vs non-swivel

Watch the "Swivel vs Non-Swivel" video on the YouTube Shark Fin Shears channel

<https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=TDBXWNewlyU>

The thumb ring rotates so you prevent neck and shoulder pain because you can relax your shoulder, keep from lifting your arm, and keep your wrist straight. **They are not made to prevent carpal tunnel. Convex is for that.**

Checked Off	Checklist Item
	Am I willing to try swivels to prevent neck and shoulder pain in the long term?

I. Non-Swivel Handles

Handle configuration is probably one of the biggest considerations when choosing a new shear.

- Best: 3D offset
- Ok choice: OFF-SET and CRANE-HANDLE shears put less strain on the body and are usually a better choice. Offset means one of the shanks is shorter than the other, versus "straight handle".
- Worst: OPPOSING or STRAIGHT handled shears put the most strain on the hand, wrist, arm, shoulder, neck and back.



I. Opposing Handle

Symmetrical setup. Flippable for versatile use



II. Offset Handle

Handle length is not the same each other. Fits easily into hand with less stress on wrist and hand. Restricts blades' open range but finger holes are positioned so to make regular cutting easier than with Opposing Handle.



III. Crane Offset Handle

Derived from Offset Handle. Stationary side is bent down past scissor's center line. Blades can be quickly opened. Most useful for high volume, rough cutting.



IV. 3D Offset Handle

Ergonomically designed handle. Fits better in hand than non-3D Offset Handle. Snug fit restricts play on fingers but reduces overall stress for hand.



Checked Off	Checklist Item
<input type="checkbox"/>	I choose the following handle type (circle): 3D offset, non-3D offset, Crane

J. Right/left

If you are a lefty, never use a right-handed shear. You will damage your hand and the shears because you will apply cross-pressure, which strains your thumb.

Checked Off	Checklist Item
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am left handed and will use only left handed shears

K. Thick hair

If you cut thick hair, you need one or more of these:

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- Longer shears
- Thicker blade or stronger steel
- Serrated tip: grabs hair but hard on hands

Checked Off	Checklist Item
	I cut lots of thick hair

L. Ball Bearing Pivot Tension

- Has ball bearings which are sealed and embedded into the shears' handle.
- Better thumb rotation compared to other types of tension systems because promotes stabilization of the pivot action.
- Reinforce the strength and durability of the shears.
- Can't see it on the outside. Ask the sales person.

Checked Off	Checklist Item
	I will ask if the shears have a bearing

M. Curved shears

Instead of clippers, you can use 6" to 7" shears to trim beards and afros.

Checked Off	Checklist Item
	I want to try curved shears

N. Test the shears out!!!

Test it out on at least a couple of haircuts! The more you test it, the more you will either love it or hate it.

Checked Off	Checklist Item
	Are the plastic finger ring inserts the right size? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The thumb knuckle should stop the ring• The second ring knuckle should stop the ring
	Is the swivel too loose or tight?
	Do I feel control of the shears? This is especially important if I am testing a swivel shear.
	Are the rings too small?

7. Protect your body

You are not young forever. After thousands of haircuts, bad habits will damage your body.

Checked Off	Checklist Item
	I am putting my pinky on the ringer rest
	I will try swivels so the muscles from my neck to my elbow won't be overstressed and damaged over time.
	I will use the techniques I learn in school like good arm and hand posture, good back posture, good shoes, floor pads

8. Choosing a sharpener

Checked Off	Checklist Item
	Isn't amazingly cheap in price (red flag!)
	Must do a thorough job.
	Takes most shears apart.

Checked Off	Checklist Item
	Cleans them thoroughly and removes minor corrosion.
	Bends bent shears back into shape if they are forged shears.
	Replaces bad or missing bumpers, click plates, and finger rests.
	If your convex shears need sharpening, he must use a convex sharpening machine. Never let someone use a knife sharpener or a grinder or your convex will be permanently damaged.
	Lubricates and tests them.

9. What to do after sharpening or buying a new shear

Checked Off	Checklist Item
	After sharpening or buying a new shear, I will slow down to reprogram my muscle memory

10. Avoid big State Board fines

Checked Off	Checklist Item
	I will NEVER store my shears in cases that cannot be disinfected, like vinyl or leather cases. I will store them in plastic trays I can get from haircutting supplies stores or hobby stores
	All my contains are marked either "CLEAN" or "SOILED"

11. Keep your shears safe

Checked Off	Checklist Item
	I cut only hair with them and don't pry open drawers with them
	I keep each shear separated from each other so they won't nick each other. If I have to store multiple shears together, put the handles in opposite directions to minimize nicks.
	I keep them in a case or rack or something that breathes so they won't rust
	I keep shears away from my dryer and cord
	I won't keep lying on a towel because someone may grab a towel to clean it and the scissors may fall or be put in a washing machine
	I won't use magnetic shear holders because shears can become magnetized and collect metal dust particles
	I will keep them away from children
	I will not loan my shears to someone else because they may work badly
	I will consider using an extra-large mat so when I drop shears they won't hit hard ground

12. Exercises

- Find the right rings for your shears
- Use a swivel on a mannequin
- Test your shears to see if they need sharpening
- Look at your shears for problems like bad bumper, nicks