

Frequently Asked Questions - SWIVEL KNIVES

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What advantage does the SK-3 Swivel Knife have over its competitors to make it the most expensive knife on the market?

- 1st: UNCOMPROMISED QUALITY - We use only the highest quality materials - there are no seconds - it's either the best, or it hits the trash bin. I apply this to the yoke, bearing, shaft, barrel, and most importantly, the blade.
- 2nd: It's the LIGHTEST SWIVEL KNIFE IN THE MARKET - a 1/2" barrel with a 1/2" blade and a large yoke weighs about 9/10 ounces - yet it's strong enough to handle even the roughest leather carvers.
- 3rd: Our SK-3 SWIVEL KNIFE GOES OUT SHARPENED, STROPPED, & READY TO CUT - it's totally up to you as to whether and when you strop it after that. We've had some customers say that they don't even need to strop, but still do it out of habit, so it doesn't need frequent stropping. Paul has tried over 22 different alloys, hardened and tempered to everything from RC-67 down to RC-45, which has resulted in approximately 220 different combinations of alloy and tempering techniques. Our blades will cut as smoothly on the best-of-breed top shelf leather, as it will on the bargain basement, inexpensive leather.
- 4th: It's CUSTOMIZED TO FIT YOU – you can adjust the height so it fits to your hand, and you get to choose between yoke styles and barrel sizes. Once the right combination of components is put together, you can carve effortlessly, all the while enjoying ultimate comfort.
- 5th: COLOR CHOICES – some can claim that color does not make a swivel knife perform any better, but it can add that one more touch that makes it special just for you.

What type of life could one expect from the finish on the barrels? Will the color wear or chip off?

The SK-3 Swivel Knife barrels are made of aerospace aluminum and are color-anodized with a protective oxide coating that is resistant to corrosion and abrasion. The coating is durable, will never peel, and will not wear through under normal conditions.

Can the barrel be modified to accept Tandy blades?

Sure, it could be drilled to fit the Tandy blades....but why would you want to do that? This blade is smoother than any blade out there and will hold an edge longer, plus we have blades from 1/2" down to 1/8".

Do you make angle blades?

We can custom grind any angle on any of our blade sizes, including a steep angle like the Tandy ceramic or a more shallow angle.

How does your alloy blade compare to ceramic blades?

There is no real way to compare steel alloy to ceramic blades. You can sharpen your steel blade but generally, ceramic blades cannot be sharpened. Our blade will perform as smooth or smoother than most ceramic blades, it will slice the leather rather than just dent it, and it will hold a good, long cutting edge.

Do you sell your blades by themselves? And do they fit in any swivel knife?

Yes, we do sell our blades by themselves, and they are interchangeable with our swivel knives (SK-3, SK-V, and SK-B). The shafts only fit our swivel knives, but we can modify them to fit most any other swivel knife barrel.

Do you make beader blades or hollow ground blades?

Not at this time.

Why is your knife so light? Is it all aluminum?

The SK-3 is not "all aluminum." The barrel is 6061-T6 aerospace quality aluminum, which we anodize to make it harder at the surface, giving the added benefit of doing it in different colors. The SK-3 swivel knife is ultra lightweight – the 1/2" exotic alloy blade on a 1/2" barrel with a large bronze yoke, only weighs 9/10 ounces – very easy on the hand when cutting for many hours!

Your swivel knife blades are a bit unique and I was wondering, do you have a sharpening guide that attaches to the swivel knife like Tandy's?

We carry the Keen Edge Sharpening fixture (available through Tandy Leather), but we bore ours on one side to fit our blade. For those that already have a Tandy sharpener, we send a replacement Allen set screw to close the gap and fit our blade in the fixture for sharpening.

Regarding the SK-3 swivel knife yoke, is there an advantage to the shape – either flat or saddle?

The two swivel knife yoke shapes are designed for the user's ease, comfort, and control of the SK-3. The rounded yoke tends to be preferred by people that have large hands and/or very wide fingers. It is most comfortable for people that use a push and pull technique when carving or wrap the knuckle of their finger around the yoke. The flat (or more traditional) yoke is preferred by people that like more of a snug fit or have an average-to-smaller sized hand or slender fingers. They also tend to place the pad of their finger on the flat part of the yoke rather than the knuckle.

I have slightly small hands for a guy and they get a bit achy after a long carving session with my swivel knife... how can your swivel knife help with that?

Several reasons can cause your hands to get achy after long carving sessions. Commonly, if the knife is too tall, it will strain the top part of the back of your hand; if it's too short, the bottom part or inside of your hand will cramp. Also, how you hold your knife and how much pressure you apply when carving could cause discomfort. Our SK-3 is 1" height adjustable, remarkably lightweight, and the blade is extremely sharp – it will easily cut through leather without much pressure. Because of this, you can enjoy more carving time without fatigue and discomfort.

Do you make your SK-3 swivel knife a specific length?

Our SK-3 is 1" height adjustable. If that doesn't work for you, we can make a swivel knife and blade combination to your specifications. We recommend our SK-V swivel knife, which can be customized to your height, width, and material (braided, wood, beaded, polymer clay, etc.).

I am interested in the SK-3 but don't know what is best for me as I haven't used too many swivel knives before. What do you recommend?

We custom build our swivel knife so you can pick the combination that fits best for you and for your style of work. The most popular combination for most anything smaller than saddle size carving is a 3/8" barrel with a 1/4" straight blade. You then get to pick from one of our many colors and the yoke that you think will best work with your hand.

Does the ball bearing require any maintenance on your swivel knife?

The ball bearing is lubricated and sealed – so it keeps dust and other particles out – it is totally maintenance-free.

Why can't I order a SK-B Performance Essentials Swivel Knife with a large yoke?

The purpose behind the Performance Essentials SK-B swivel knife was to be able to offer a very economical alternative to the SK-3. We had to make serious decisions on how to be able to do that without compromising its performance and quality. Our decision resulted in a brass barrel (which is considerably heavier than the SK-3) and eliminating as many options as possible — namely, the color and yoke.

Will you ever make concave blades?

After exhaustive study and critical testing, we found that the Appleseed or convex (or Moran edge) was the best grind for cutting harder or tougher tissue. The convex has been around for decades and has proved to be one of the more durable edges (axe, log splitter, etc.). We put what appears to be a flat grind, but really at the cutting edge, we have a convex cutting edge. This edge causes tissue to spread and cut with significantly less friction. Concave edges are really great for slicing through fiber and tissue in thin layers, but convex edges are more durable and hold an edge longer.

Do you offer any swivel knives in a 5/8" barrel?

I can hand-turn a SK-V swivel knife in wood for you, to your specific dimensions. The very customizable tool-less blade change SK-V swivel knife comes complete with your choice of yoke style and sharpened, ready-to-use swivel knife blade.

How does the Tandy keen edge sharpening fixture that you sell work to sharpen your flat blades?

We bore out the shaft on the sharpening fixture to fit our blades. The shaft on our blades is flat but it fits the smaller hole and then you place your finger on the blade as you sharpen. Please check out the video in the Tips & Tricks section of our website, titled, "How to Sharpen Your Swivel Knife Blade" for a demonstration.

I am new to leathercraft and am looking for a swivel knife. What size do you recommend?

Hands down the most popular swivel knife combination for small to medium leather work is a 1/4" blade on a 3/8" barrel. The smaller barrel gives you more control when making tighter turns because of its smaller circumference. Also, the smaller the blade, the smaller the detail. For larger work or longer curves and straight lines, the 1/2" barrel with a larger blade works great where a smaller blade would be more challenging.