

## SCISSORS: THEORY & TECHNIQUE

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### Purchasing Shears

There are many things to consider when purchasing shears. Most groomers look first at the price. Think of purchasing shears as an investment in your career. In any industry, having the right tools can either make or break your finished product. There are several types of metals available in shears. The harder more durable metals are more expensive but will last longer and hold an edge longer. I would recommend having at least two types of shears, one that will go through heavy coats and a finishing shear (in curve and straight). I also like to have a shear that I use to rough in dogs when necessary. Having a nice variety of shears makes your job so much more enjoyable. Consider it your collection and add to it wisely.

### Different Blade Types.

**Japanese Shear.** This type of shear has a convex edge. A convex edge is a blade that is not flat. The inside of the blade is actually curved for the hair to escape easily. The outside of the blade is also curved. This is a top quality shear that is used for finish work only. The sharp edge tapers to a point. With this type of blade you need less force to cut through hair. You will get a beautiful finish with less effort. The down side of this type of edge is that it damages easier.

**German Shear.** This shear is a work horse. The blade is flat. Some have a serrated edge and one honed edge. It grabs the hair nicely and is very durable. This type of shear will cut through heavy coats. This shear is very durable although you have to exert more energy while scissoring.

The difference in these two types of shears is the metal hardness. The German style shear is a softer metal. This means that the blades are more durable. If you drop this type of shear it has some flexibility. It will bend. It can be easily repaired by an experienced scissor specialist. The Japanese style shears have a harder metal. They have less flexibility. If dropped you may damage the tip. Your sharpener may also have difficulty setting them with lack of flexibility.

Different shank sizes vary. A proper fit of your hand to the shank of your shear is vital.

A choice of screw or dial is now available. A dial makes it very easy to adjust the tension on your shears while working on different coat textures, where with a screw you would need the proper plier to adjust it. To adjust your shear, hold your scissor with the thumb hole up. Open the shear and drop the thumb hole. When adjusted correctly the scissor blades should not close completely.

## **Thinning Shears.**

Thinning shears can be very confusing to buy. Unlike scissor you cannot pick up thinning shears to see how they feel. It is all about the teeth, then how they feel. You have to decide what type of work you are trying to do before purchasing a thinner. Are you wanting to blend and soften or are you looking for a thinning shear that is more aggressive and removes coat quickly. The width of the teeth and the space between the teeth determines the cut. On each tooth there is a "v" like notch. Some notches are very deep, some are very shallow. The deeper the notch the more coat is going to be removed. My analogy of thinning shears is this. Think of a straight scissor. Now cut a few notches in the blade. When you go to cut hair the hair that falls in those notches will not be cut. The only hair that will be cut is the hair on the blade. With thinning shears, the hair that falls between the teeth is not cut. Which means, the wider the teeth the more hair is cut. The finer the teeth, less hair is cut. You also have the double sided thinning shears which is very aggressive

and used primarily to "thinning" the coat and for dematting purposes. I would recommend having at least two thinning shears, one shear for finer detail work and one for blending and softening. As you become more experienced with thinners you can add to your collection. Thinning shears are absolutely wonderful tools and come in many different varieties.

## **Shear Maintenance.**

Oil shears 2-3 times per week. Open blades and put two drops of shear oil around the screw or back of dial. Work the oil in by opening and closing the shear. Wipe off any excess oil with a soft cloth. Always store your shears in a leather or breathable sleeve, not plastic.

## **Sharp Shears.**

A dull shear will bend the hair rather than cut it. To check to see if your shears need to be sharpened test them on a piece of tissue. You should get an even cut all the way to the tip. If the tip does not cut through the tissue, it will not cut through the hair and you will not get a nice finish.

## **Holding Your Shear.**

To hold your shear correctly place your ring finger halfway into the lower finger hole and place the tip of your thumb on the thumb hole. Hold the shank of the shear with your middle and index finger. Your middle and index finger will have control of the shear. Practice opening and closing the shear while watching TV until you get the technique down. You always want your thumb to open and close in a natural position. Do not bend your wrist.

## **Body language.**

The way you carry your body while scissoring can help you scissor faster, more efficiently as well as prevent fatigue. Keep your upper arm close to your body when possible. Always move your body with your arm. Never reach while scissoring. Never scissor what you can't see!

## **Scissoring techniques.**

Scissoring speed is not as important as the flow of your shear. Keep your shear moving without bouncing. If you bounce your scissor off your coat your scissor will never return to the exact spot you left which creates uneven scissoring. Glide your scissor over the coat at a comfortable speed. Your scissoring speed will come with experience and confidence. When you have a vision of where you are going scissoring becomes effortless.

## **Coat Preparation.**

Before you begin it is very important that your dog is prepared properly. With a "poodle-like" coat it is important to use a nice deep cleansing shampoo with a very light conditioner. You do not want to use anything that will weigh down the coat. You want the coat to stand up and salute! While preparing a drop coat you may use more conditioner.

Your coats should be dried to the almost dry state with a high velocity dryer. The coat must be straightened from the skin out. All the hair between the toes should be blown out straight. After the high velocity dryer a stand dryer or warm air dryer should be used to go through the coat while brushing. Brush the hair up and out. Never down. The straighter you get your coat the better finish you will get. Most groomers have trouble getting a good finish on their dogs because of poor coat preparation. If you leave waves or curls in the coat, the hair will always lose its shape every time you re-comb to scissor. You may use a scissoring spray which doing your final straightening with the stand dryer. This



will ensure a nice straight coat. I prefer to use Crown Royal Moisture Magic Formula #3 for poodle-type coats and Formula #2 for drop coats.

**Any questions or comments feel free to contact me at**

**[www.jodimurphy.net](http://www.jodimurphy.net)**

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