

Pinkers

<jensoriginalsembroiderydesigns.yolasite.com>

Originally posted 2026 July 3

In the city where I live, you can get a pair of your good shears keened up by any one of several sharpening services. Depending on their condition and whether any repairs are needed, the sharpening will cost somewhere between \$14 and \$25.

But if your pinking shears have lost their edge, you might just be out of luck: many of these services rule out tackling pinking shears, which have a tricky reputation when it comes to sharpening.

For this reason, until recently I'd always just taken for granted that pinkers are nearly impossible to sharpen.





But after I purchased my Sharpal and had sharpened all the scissors in the house, I decided to tackle a dull pair of Henckels pinking shears that I'd almost given up on. To my surprise, I was able to get them sharp enough to cut fabrics. I began to wonder why so few sharpening services will take pinking shears.



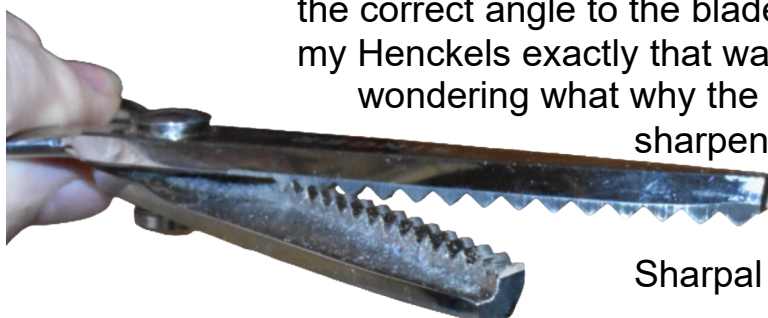
From my reading on line, I gather that there's a high failure rate for sharpening pinkers: one source estimated 50% . . . yikes! Good thing I didn't read that before I tried sharpening that dull Henckels pair!

Quite by accident, I discovered what I think may be a reason behind this traditional reluctance to sharpen pinking shears. It has to do with the way they are made, or at least the way they used to be made.



As it happens, I own a dozen or so pairs of pinking shears, including two Singers, two Fiskars, two Henckels, one Wiss, one Richards Golden Age Rustless pair, and a handful of others. All of them are made in pretty the same way: the teeth are set at right angles to the blade.

This configuration means they can be sharpened like conventional shears, by drawing the stone across the cutting edge at the correct angle to the blade. I sharpened my Henckels exactly that way, which left me wondering what why the hesitation about sharpening pinking shears



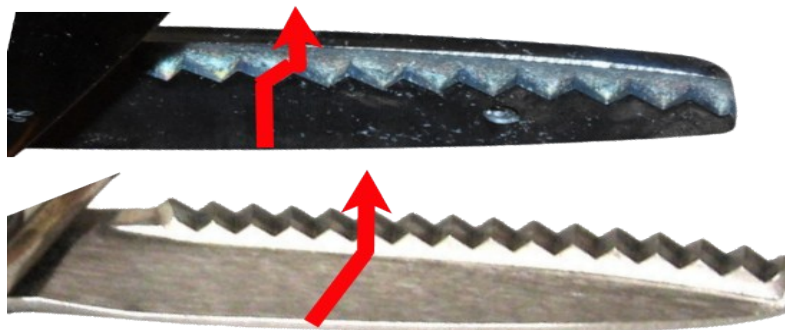
might have arisen. After all, mine yielded quite nicely to the Sharpal device, and I'm no sharpening expert.

By happenstance, my collection of pinkers includes a vintage German-made pair, and when I looked at those, I saw immediately why they would be difficult (and impossible for me) to sharpen: the blades are set differently from all the other pairs.

Unlike all my other pairs on which the cutting edge is perpendicular to the blade movement, the cutting edge on this



vintage pair is parallel to the direction of the blades. It is also recessed below from the blade edge.



Pinking shears were first patented in 1934 by Samuel Briskman. As near as I can tell, the original patent was for a design with vertical cutting edges like these. This design would be much more difficult to sharpen, and I imagine that the failure rate would indeed have been high. I'm speculating that it's this original configuration that gained pinkers such a bad reputation among the sharpening classes.



I'm not sure how old my vintage German pinkers are, but they appear to have been made in the style of Briskman's original design. In subsequent years, he was granted several other patents, and by 1947, most pinking shears seem to have been configured according to the style more familiar to us today.

I must say I'm glad that my lovely vintage German pinkers are already sharp. To keep them that way, I won't use them. Instead, I'll reach for one of my other pairs if I want to pink any edges: if need be, I can always sharpen those.