

Look Sharp! My New Sharpal 201H

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Over the years I've accumulated a number of devices for sharpening scissors, including a small sharpening stone in leather case, and a variety of ceramic sharpeners.



I've been able to keep most of my scissors satisfactorily sharp with these hand-held devices, but I've never felt completely happy with my mastery of the art of sharpening scissors. Lately I decided it was time to change that.

I like the idea of hand-sharpening using a stone, and I wanted to learn better how it's done. So I purchased a larger dual-surfaced stone and studied several instructional videos for tips on how to improve.



Although my ultimate goal was to learn how to sharpen my good sewing shears, I didn't want to risk damaging them through inexpert tinkering, so I began by practising



on my household and paper to cut fabric. Most of a few were too dulled for

scissors, with the goal of getting them sharp enough even that. Nevertheless, I was sure that they could be sharpened up, and I wanted to know how to do that for myself.

With determined practice on the stone, I improved my technique, and I kept at it until I managed to get several pairs of paper scissors to the point where they could cut lightweight fabric.



But a few of my second-hand scissors, which appeared to have been ill-used by previous owners, stubbornly refused to yield to my sharpening efforts.



I was almost ready to give up and relegate them permanently to paper-only status.

Then, in the course of my on-line investigations, I came across reviews of the Sharpal 201H, a fixed-angle sharpening device made especially for scissors.

The concept is simple: the scissors are clamped in place at the correct angle to match the bevel of the scissor blade, then you draw the diamond sharpening stone across the blade.

Several strokes later, release the scissors from the clamp, wipe them with a soft cloth, and give them a try. If you've got the angle right, the scissors will be sharper.



The angle can be determined with the aid of an angle finder, but if you don't have one of those (I do not), you can colour the bevel with a marker, then adjust the settings until the colour is removed with a stroke of the diamond surface.

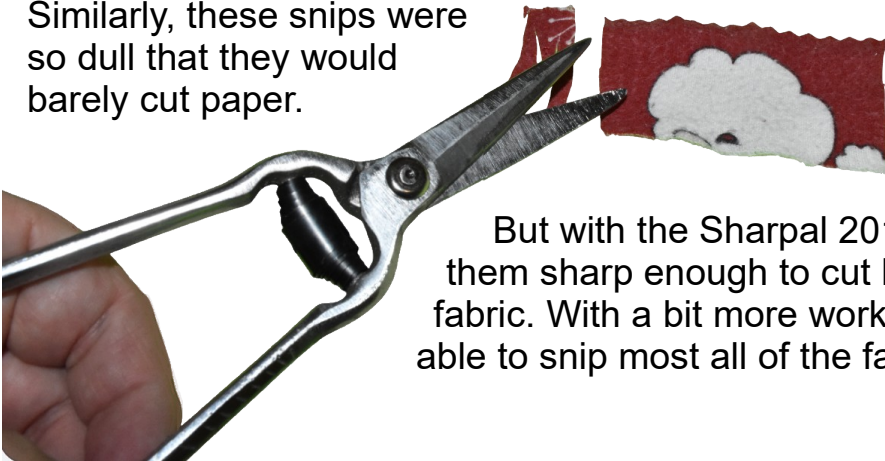
All the reliable demos and reviews were positive, and since the gadget was relatively inexpensive (under \$100 CDN), I bought one. When it arrived, I got back to work on those recalcitrant scissors. And guess what happened next?

Now that I've used it to sharpen a couple dozen pairs of scissors, including a few that were so far gone that I didn't think I could ever get them sharp, I can add my own positive review to those I saw on line.

Here's why: these inexpensive scissors, which I had been using in the kitchen, had become too dull even to cut open a plastic bag of frozen vegetables! After I sharpened them using a combination of the Sharpal 201H and my dual-surface sharpening stone, I was able to cut not only the plastic bags, but also all these different fabrics. Wow!



Similarly, these snips were so dull that they would barely cut paper.



But with the Sharpal 201H, I got them sharp enough to cut lightweight fabric. With a bit more work, they were able to snip most all of the fabrics I tried.

Pinking shears are notoriously difficult to sharpen successfully, and in fact some sharpening services won't even touch them. This pair of Henckels were so dull that they would not cut *anything*. Instead, they simply chewed the fabric without cutting, so I figured I didn't have much to lose by trying the Sharpal gadget on them. Once I felt confident with the device, I tried it out on the pinkers. The result amazed me.



For the first time since I acquired them, I was able to smoothly cut a variety of fabrics: No binding, no chewing of the material. Just a nice, clean pinked edge. Wow.

I was able to bring back to sharp functionality many more pairs than just these three, including several I had designated as paper only. Now, most all my scissors are nicely sharp, including not only those pinkers that I had all but written off, but also some heavy-duty shop scissors, two nice plastic-handled fabric shears, and even several small paper scissors.



Once I'd had lots of practice using the Sharpal 201H on my less expensive scissors, I decided to try touching up some of my good fabric shears.

I didn't do that right out of the gate, of course: instead, I waited until I felt that I had a good grasp of using the sharpener.

All these needed was a light touch-up, and they are buttery sharp again.



In all, I'm pleased with my new sharpening jig, and I will keep it at hand in the crafting loft, where I'll be sure to use it regularly. I'm much more confident now that I can keep my tools sharp and happy – so much so that I'm thinking about trying it on my paper cutters. (Not quite yet, but after a bit more practice). And I might even invest in the Sharpal 202H, to tackle my kitchen knives.