

Sewing Basics - Tools of the Trade

By Nancy Fiedler

Just like any tradesman, all sewists need a multitude of tools for cutting fabric, interfacing, stabilizers, batting and more.

Scissors are a must have and there are many to choose from. Each type has a specific purpose to help you get perfect results for every project.

Fabric/Dressmaker Shears

Shears have sharp long blades for clean precision cutting of pattern pieces and other large fabric cuts. The finger bow on the bottom of the shears gives more leverage to cut 2 or more layers easily. Look to stainless steel blades as these can be sharpened. Shears come in a variety of lengths. (6, 7, 8 and 9.5 are common sizes.)



Straight Trimmer

For a controlled cut, a straight trimmer is the best choice. Razor sharp edges and sharp tips allow you to trim fabric edges and threads, clip curves and grade seams. Trimmers cut applique pieces with precision.



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Duck Bill Applique Scissors

Duck bill scissors are designed with a 1/2" blade that protects the lower layer while grading seams, trimming away reverse applique or cutting away stabilizer from the back of embroidery.



Double Curved Scissors

Double curved scissors have a unique curved handled designed for getting up and over machine embroidery hoops as well as trimming under the needle on long arm machines. The curved blade allows for safe trims, close to the fabric without snagging or gouging.



Large Ring Micro Tip Scissors

Large finger rings make it simple to slip your fingers in and out when trimming threads. Micro tips are extremely fine and sharp for clipping hard to reach places, clipping curves, poking a hole and cutting buttonholes.



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Curved Scissors

Curved scissors are great for snipping threads while sewing, quilting and embroidery work. The curved shape allows you to trim threads close to the fabric accurately and quickly and the small size makes navigating closely in the embroidery hoop or under the needle easy.



Curved Snip

Snips make quick work when a cutting thread tails for all type of needlework, embroidery, quilting and sewing. The spring action works for righties and lefties as well as users with hand ailments which cause pain when snipping with scissors.



*It is a good idea to keep a separate set of scissors for paper crafting.

Besides scissors, these next tools are designed to help you hold thread, fix mistakes and cut fabric with ease.

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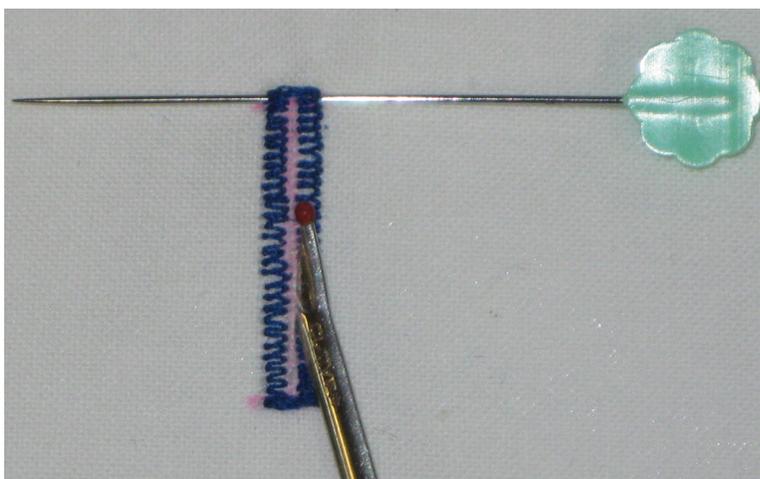
Angled Tweezers

Use the tips of the tweezers for precise plucking of unwanted thread or knots. Threading serger loopers is made simpler when using a tweezer to pass the thread through the guides and with a little practice, you will even find threading needles easier. Turn the tweezers over and use the flat side of the angled tweezers to pick up crystals or metallic studs to place them precisely on the fabric. Keep a pair of tweezers with your digital cutter tools as well as with your sewing tools.



Seam Ripper

A sharp seam ripper is essential for removing unwanted stitches and seams. The sharp point will slip under the stitches for single stitch removal and the ball will separate the layers to allow you to slide the ripper along a seam. Follow this link, <http://www.sew4home.com/tips-resources/sewing-tips-tricks/how-rip-out-seam>, for a great tutorial from our friends at Sew4Home on using a seam ripper. Use this seam ripper to open buttonholes, simply put a straight pin across the top of the buttonhole, insert the tip in the fabric and slowly cut the fabric.



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Surgical Seam Ripper with Replacement Blade

This seam ripper has a screw-lock for easy replacement of the razor sharp and rust resistant blades. The curved blade slides easily through the stitches.



Rotary Cutter

With the advent of the rotary cutter, preparing fabric for quilts was never easier. Cutters come in a variety of styles, the traditional straight handle as well as ergonomically shaped handles. They are available in 3 standard blade sizes which are replaceable.



28mm

This small blade is just the right size for following pattern pieces and free hand cutting.



45mm

The 45mm is the most popular size for cutting quilt blocks.



60mm

The large size of the blade gives you extra power for cutting through multiple layers.



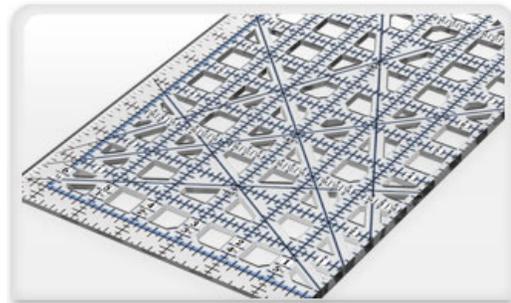
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Acrylic Ruler

Clear acrylic rulers will act as a guide to cut straight lines with the rotary cutter. These rulers will have printed lines for accuracy. Look for rulers with 1/8" increments and angle lines for cutting triangles, diamonds and hexagons.

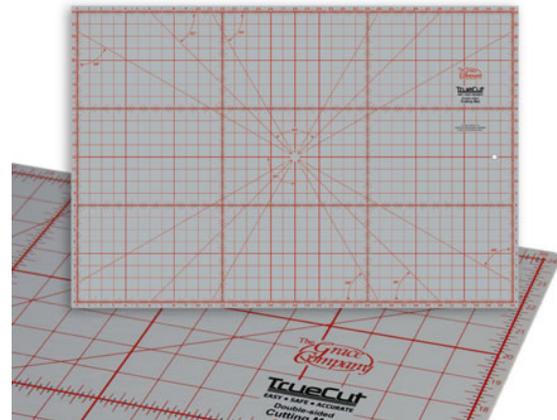


Rulers come in a variety of widths, lengths and shapes. You will want an assortment on hand for cutting ease.



Self-Healing Cutting Mats

Self-healing mats come in many sizes. Choose the size according to your uses. Table size are perfect for the studio's cutting table and smaller sizes are best for traveling to classes and workshops. Use the guide lines with the acrylic ruler for straight cuts and use the angles for cutting bias strips.



We like the True Cut cutting system!

The guide of the rotary cutter sits securely on the ruler track to prevent slippage for perfectly straight strips and squares. Follow this link, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqHOX4od2Ks&feature=player_embedded, to see the True Cut cutting system from our friends at The Grace Company.

