

Tool Maintenance & Sharpening

Keep hand tools and blades in good working condition

DIFFICULTY Easy
TYPE Ongoing routine practice
TIME 10–20 min per tool



DIFFICULTY
Easy



TIME
10–20 min/tool



COST
Low



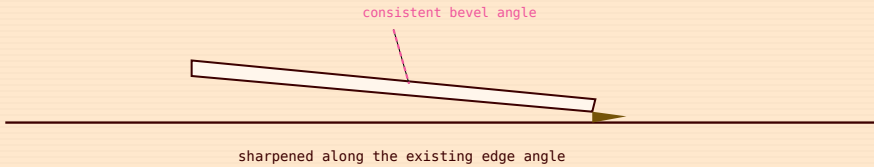
BEST SEASON
Year-round



FREQUENCY
Regularly, before and after heavy use

01 Maintain the existing bevel angle

Most sharpening mistakes come from changing the tool's existing bevel angle rather than maintaining it — a consistent angle, even if not textbook-perfect, sharpens faster and more predictably than constantly guessing a new one.



02 What you'll need

- A sharpening stone or file appropriate to the tool
- A honing guide (optional, helps maintain a consistent angle)
- Oil or water for stone lubrication, per stone type
- A wire brush and oil for general tool cleaning and rust prevention

03 Method

1. Clean the tool of dirt, sap, or rust before sharpening.
2. Identify the existing bevel angle and maintain it consistently through the sharpening process.
3. Sharpen using smooth, consistent strokes, working from coarser to finer grit as needed.
4. Remove the resulting burr with a fine stone or strop.
5. Oil metal parts before storage to prevent rust, particularly for tools not used for a while.

04 Troubleshooting

- **Blade won't take a sharp edge** — check for a consistent angle throughout the stroke; a wandering angle prevents a clean edge from forming.
- **Tool rusting between uses** — clean and lightly oil after each use, and store in a dry location.
- **Sharpening making the edge worse** — usually inconsistent angle or too aggressive a grit for touch-up maintenance; use finer grits for routine maintenance, coarser only for damage or reshaping.
- **Handle or fitting becoming loose** — address promptly; a loose handle is a safety issue as much as a maintenance one.

05 Timing & maintenance

BEST TIME	Before heavy seasonal use (start of pruning season, for example), and periodically through the year.
DURATION	10–20 minutes per tool for routine maintenance sharpening.
MAINTENANCE	Regular light maintenance is far more effective than occasional heavy correction — little and often.
SIGNS OF SUCCESS	Tools that cut cleanly with reasonable effort, hold an edge through normal use, and show no active rust.

06 Tips & variations

PAIRS WELL WITH

[Pruning Basics](#)

[Butchering Lamb & Goat](#)

COMMON MISTAKES

Trying to establish a completely new bevel angle instead of maintaining the existing one

Neglecting tools between uses, allowing rust and dulling to compound

PRO TIP

A few minutes of touch-up sharpening before each use session prevents the far longer, more difficult job of restoring a badly neglected edge.