



Dr Shave's Book of Shaving

Shaving Tools

_____ The expert guide to the world of shaving _____

Introduction

Here Dr Shave takes you through the myriad of shaving razors, cartridge, safety, and cut throat and if you want to know what the difference is between the various grades of badger hair shaving brushes read on.

Shaving Tools

Razors

Razors come in many forms and each have their advantages and disadvantages. Once you have finished reading this chapter you should be able to purchase with confidence a razor that will be the best one for you.

This is your razor. There are many like it but this one is yours.

History

Ancient Romans and Grecians used iron blades with a long handle and developed the shape of the cut-throat razor which was the only practical razor until the 19th century.

Improvements in steel manufacturing enabled cut throat razor blades to be made sharper and for the first time, they could be re-sharpened.

Advances in razor technology changed shaving habits in the 20th century.

In 1900, most men were either shaved by the local barber, or periodically at home when required, rather than regularly.

Straight / Cut Throat Razor Material

In general, the blades of straight razors are made of steel; the more recent razors have blades made from stainless steel. The manufacturer's markings are often found engraved or etched on the blades which may include the model number or name of the razor.

The handles of straight razors are made from all sorts of different materials, including wood, rubber, horn, ivory, Bakelite, ivory, and metal. Inlays can be of mother of pearl, silver, gold, stainless steel, copper, ivory, wood and tortoiseshell.

If you opt to try out a straight razor do ensure that you receive basic instruction in its use and that the razor feels 'comfortable' in your hand. These days we have the benefit of YouTube.

It may take many shaves before you can consider yourself a cut throat razor wizard.

Please note: A cut-throat razor must be used with extreme caution.



The types of razors available include:

- Straight or 'cut throat' razors
- Disposable blade straight razors, usually known as Shavette's
- Double edged safety razors
- Mach 3 razors
- Fusion razors
- Electric razors.

Straight or Cut Throat Razors

The straight-edge razor is also known as the cut-throat razor because, if misused, it is capable of cutting the throat.

A cut throat razor has a single straight blade that is attached to a handle (the handles on cut throat razors are known as scales) by a hinge and is stored by folding it edge-first into a slot in the handle of the razor.

Shaving with a cut throat razor or straight razor is considered by many shaving traditionalists as **the very best way to shave.**



Cut throat razor and strop

How to Look After a Cut Throat Razor

The cut throat or straight razor must be properly maintained in order to ensure the long life and effectiveness of this traditional men's accessory. While straight razors made of stainless steel are less demanding, other straight razors have to be rinsed with water and thoroughly dried after each use.

Make sure your razor is thoroughly dried and aired before storing.

When not in use for longer periods, it is recommended that the blade of the straight razor be rubbed with light oil such as [Muhle's Razor Maintenance Oil](#).

Maintaining the Cutting Edge

Experienced cut throat users know that the facet (blade) 'grows', i.e. the microscopically fine 'fin' on the cutting edge changes during the shave but returns to its old position afterwards; it stretches and again becomes extremely fine.

The 'fin' will wear away at some stage and a suitable strop should then be used.

A strop is a strip of special soft leather with a hanging loop at one end used to whet (sharpen) the blade. Usually a strop will have two sides; one made from fine leather, the other from coarse leather. Other strops may have fine leather and either denim, linen or a fabric similar to car seat belt material.

If required, the fine leather side can be rubbed with an extremely thin layer of fine



abrasive paste and - for a final polishing on a separate strop - with polishing paste, which is worked in with a clean cotton cloth.

Straight razors are usually whetted in the factory for use (whetting on leather by hand). If you 'strop' yourself, you must first 'rest' the razor after use.

After the razor has been carefully rinsed and dried, it should not be used again for at least 24 – 48 hours because the fine 'fin' on the cutting edge straightens up again extremely slowly.

If the razor is stropped too soon (or stropped incorrectly by moving it backwards and forwards without turning it over), the 'fin' which is necessary for a close shave breaks off.

Between four and fifteen shaves are possible without stropping in between depending on your beard growth, the quality of the razor and your stropping technique.

How to strop:

- With a flat angle lay the back of the razor on the strop
- Draw the blade along the strop, away from the body
- Turn the razor over on its back and draw it in towards the body
- *Note:* Changing directions without turning the razor over makes the blade become round (crowned) so that the cutting properties are lost
- In this case, only re-sharpening with a hone can help.

Disposable Blade Straight Razors

These are razors which are similar in use and appearance to straight razors but which use either a standard double edged blade or specially made custom blades.

Many razors of this type are referred to as 'Shavette's' although this name was originally restricted to a razor manufactured by Dovo in Germany.

Disposable bladed straights have many of the advantages of straight razors without needing the stropping and honing of ordinary straight razors. Many barbers worldwide use Shavette razors for shaving customers.

Tips

- Store straight razors in a well-ventilated, dry environment
- Keep straight razors out of water and away from liquids as much as possible
- Do not clean with bleach, ammonia or detergents as these substances can cause damage
- Metal polishes, such as Brasso, Silvo, or Autosol should never be used
- If the blade is exceptionally dull or nicked, the use of a honing stone is recommended
- Use a leather razor strop to maintain a keen edge - you know you're getting close when you can cleanly slice a piece of paper with your razor
- Clean the entire surface of the blade with a cotton cloth dampened with either ethyl alcohol or rubbing alcohol - this will help to de grease the blade
- Apply a thin coat of Muhle's Razor Maintenance Oil; let it sit for a short while (10 minutes, or so) and then wipe the excess oil off using a clean, dry cloth. This coating of oil will help prevent any further rusting
- Before you next use your razor rub the blade with alcohol or at least warm soapy water to remove the oil and again after use to clean the blade
- Use Muhle's Razor Maintenance Oil to re-oil the blade after use, as well as after sharpening.
- Be careful not to get any alcohol or oil on the handle.

Feather Cut Throat Razors

These beautiful razors are made in Japan using hard grade materials; they use [Feather injector blades](#) which you replace when they dull.

These razors are very popular as they deliver a shave comparable with a traditional cut throat razor but without the need for stropping or honing.

This is 21st century shaving for those who want a close yet hassle free shave with a cut throat razor.

Dr. Shave now recommends these razors above traditional cut throat razors.

Electric Razor

The electric razor (also known as the electric dry shaver) has a rotating or oscillating blade. It does not require the use of shaving cream, soap or water, with the razor being battery or mains powered.

Advantages: A speedy shave.

Disadvantages: Too many to list in their entirety but here are a few:

- ☒ They don't shave closely
- ☒ Expensive to buy
- ☒ They tend to push the hairs into the skin which can lead to ingrown hairs
- ☒ They pull and tug the hairs leading to irritation
- ☒ They often result in razor bump and razor burn
- ☒ Encourages ingrown hairs, razor bumps and razor burn.

Dr Shave is not a fan of electric razors!

Safety Razors

Initially, a [safety razor](#) will cost more than one of its modern Mach3 and Fusion type counterparts. However, in the long run a safety razor will prove itself to be a cheaper alternative.

A pack of four Fusion razor cartridges, enough for about a month, costs on



average about three times the price of a pack of ten safety razor blades that will last over three months! On that basis it's not hard to see how safety razor shaving will benefit your pocket in the long run.

Safety Razor Shaving Benefits the Environment

Firstly, you'll use three times less razor cartridges by using a safety razor; therefore, there is less waste for you to dispose of. Secondly, as [safety razor blades](#) are made of a single metal razor blade, they can be easily recycled unlike today's modern razor cartridges that are a mixture of plastic and metal.

Safety Razor Shaving Provides Better, More Consistent Shaves

Today's modern razors and electric shavers are no match for a double-edged safety razor.



These cartridges achieve their closeness by stretching the skin with a layer of rubberised 'micro fins', then by lifting the hair and slicing it off at a point slightly below the surface of the skin. It is this overzealous closeness that causes many of today's skin and shaving problems as, if shaved too closely, cut hair can grow painfully into the upper layers of the epidermis.

Once the hair follicles begin to do this, there is a high chance of causing ingrown hairs, razor bumps and razor burn.

This problem is severely reduced and even removed altogether by shaving with a good quality safety razor, leaving your skin in excellent condition every time as they cut hairs directly at the skin's surface.

Gillette Mach 3 Shaving

The three bladed [Mach 3](#) design was introduced by Gillette to allow for a very close shave with less pressure to the

skin and with fewer strokes. The huge investment in research and development has resulted in a razor that makes the closest shave more comfortable, with less irritation, even when shaving against the direction of hair growth.

This applies to fresh blades; blades used more than 3-4 times will soon go blunt and not perform as Gillette claim.

Gillette Fusion

The Gillette fusion range represents the pinnacle of shaving and razor innovation (according to Gillette).

The problem with these blades is that they are ridiculously expensive to buy and they don't maintain their edge for more than a few shaves. One way around this problem is to extend the life of each blade by up to 150 shaves by using a [RazorPit Blade Sharpener](#). This cheap tool really does work and comes highly recommended by Executive Shaving.



Shaving Brushes

Dr. Shave believes that of all the items associated with obtaining the perfect shave, the brush is vitally important.

Forget using your fingers to rub in shaving cream or soap; the only decent way of obtaining a good lather, exfoliating the skin and lifting the hairs in preparation for the shave is by use of the brush.

The term shave brush or shaving brush refers to an implement with bristles set into a handle which is used to apply shaving soap or shaving cream to the face when shaving.

Luxury handcrafted handles can be made from fine materials such as ivory or even gold and can be designed to feel well-balanced in the hand. The bristles are usually made of natural or synthetic materials.

Why Use a Shaving Brush?

Shaving brushes are used by shavers for a variety of reasons, but mainly for their ability to facilitate a close, comfortable and enjoyable shave.

Fibrous bristles hold water and heat which, when mixed with the shaving soap or shaving cream, creates a rich and moist lather. Richer and moist lather translates to better lubrication, leading to less dragging and tugging which can lead to razor burn and other skin complaints.

Because a shaving brush is most often used with a glycerine-based soap, this affects applying shaving cream by hand and causes the hair to matt or raises it unevenly, so I advise against it.

So, what are the benefits of using a shaving brush?

- Creates a rich and extremely moist lather
- Exfoliates the skin
- Softens and lifts facial hair
- Allows for a closer, trouble-free shave

Now that you've invested in a shaving brush you'll need to know how to look after it, to get the best from it and keep it for several years

- Rinse it well in clean water after each use
- Remove excess water by 'flicking' it into the sink
- Hang the brush, hair down, in a suitable brush stand
- Avoid using HOT WATER, when leathering up or cleaning your shaving brush, warm water is fine but never, ever hot water.

Shaving Brush Bristles

A shaving brush's value is determined more by its bristle type and density than any other factors. Prices for synthetic bristle brushes are the cheapest whilst top-of-the-range brushes made of the finest badger hair are much more expensive.

Historically, well-to-do men would generally shave with a badger hair brush, while commoners concerned with colloquially proper aesthetics would resort to cheaper versions made of boar or horse hair.

A shaving brush was known in Europe as something of a status symbol, an expensive or eccentric brush was a way of asserting one's personality and affluence.

These days modern materials mean that some synthetic brushes actually outperform badger brushes in many respects.

Many travel shaving brushes use synthetic hair as synthetic hair dries almost immediately.

Synthetic bristles are generally cheaper and tougher than natural bristles, The 'New Generation' of synthetic brushes produced by Vulfix / Simpson and Muhle in particular are extremely soft on the face and do retain heat and water in much the same way a badger hair brush does. However, earlier versions and cheap import versions:

- Hold less water than natural bristle brushes
- Take longer to work up a lather
- And can feel rougher on the skin.

Synthetic/natural bristles combine boar's hair with synthetic bristles in an attempt to improve the quality of the pure synthetic brush but this:

- Does not greatly affect the quality of lather produced
- And is often as stiff and 'prickly' as a synthetic bristle

- It has a higher water retention capacity than synthetic bristles
- But has a tendency to break more readily than synthetic bristle.

Badger hair bristles are the finest and most luxurious material possible for shaving brushes. Among their advantages are:

- An ideal water retention capacity
- They hold heat better than other types of bristles
- They create a superb lather
- Badger hair feels smooth on the face
- Durability has not been matched by any other synthetic or natural material.

Whilst some companies insist on using other terminology, these four grades are commonly accepted among wet shavers to best describe the quality of badger hair:

- **Pure Badger** - Pure badger is the term used to describe badger hair brushes using the most common hair from the underbelly of a badger. This hair varies greatly in softness, pliability

and colour. The hair is usually dark in colour, but fluctuates from a light tan to near-black or silvery sheen. It is generally coarser than 'best' or 'silvertip' hair due to its larger shaft. Brushes made exclusively with pure badger hair cost significantly less than 'best' and 'super' badger hair brushes.

- **Best Badger** - Best badger brushes are made with the fine and pliable hairs of the badger's body. It is longer in length and lighter in colour than 'pure' badger hair. A 'best' badger brush is more densely filled with hair than the 'pure' badger brush and will produce a correspondingly greater lather.
- **Super Badger Hair** - This grade of hair is lighter in colour than Pure and Best grades as it's taken from the back of the badger where the hair is lighter compared to the head and belly. Usually Super grade hair has a black coloured band midsection and whiter, softer tips compared to Pure and Best grades.

- **Silvertip Badger** - Silvertip grade hair comes from the back of the neck of the badger. The hair is finer than other grades and it holds heat and water better than all other grades. One way to determine if a brush bears a 'super' or 'silvertip' badger hair load is to look at the colour of the bristle tips. A true 'silvertip' brush has tips that are off-white. A 'super' brush on the other hand has bristle tips that are a more sterile, slightly greyed white. The light colour of the tips does not extend as far down the shaft of the hair. Silvertip hair is very soft on the face yet very durable too.

Shaving Brush Handles

The modern shaving brush may be traced back to France in the 1750s. The quality of these brushes differed greatly, as materials used to fashion the handles varied from the common to the exotic.

Historically, it was not uncommon for handles to be made of ivory, gold, silver, tortoise shell, crystal or porcelain.

Nowadays, shaving brushes are very similar in appearance, composition and function to their centuries-old predecessors.

Although a variety of different materials are still used to fashion shave brush handles, synthetic handles of nylon, urethane or plastic are the most common even amongst the most expensive shaving brush manufacturers.

The advantages of synthetic handles include:

- A lesser chance of breakage if dropped
- More resistant to damage by moisture.

Some people still prefer natural materials such as wood or exotic materials such as tortoise shell, but these articles are more difficult to obtain and will be priced accordingly.

The handle is modelled ergonomically, allowing for a proper grip on the brush and is designed to feel well-balanced in the hand.



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