Scissors Encyclopedia Article

Scissors

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Scissors

Scissors were an early development in hand tools, probably originating about 1500 B.C., using blades connected by a C-shaped spring at the handle end. In ancient Egypt, people used scissors to cut silhouettes, and turned this into high art. Various blades and bronze or iron scissors were produced in India, Europe, parts of the Orient, as well as in the ancient Roman world. Methods of metal forging continued to improve and, as a result, scissors and other implements became more widely used.

It was not until 1761, however, that true mass production of scissors occurred. In Sheffield, England (a city known for its cutlery since the 1300s), Robert Hinchliffe used crucible-cast steel (a highly refined type made in clay vessels) to manufacture the blades. By the 1800s, beautifully ornate hand-filed scissors became popular in Europe.

Today, machines are used to produce scissors. Red hot steel bars are turned into blanks (unfinished pieces of steel), which are then forced between the dies of drop hammers. These hammers form the rough shape of the blade. The final product is made by trimming the forgings from the blade; the blade is finally hardened (through a heating process) and tempered. The steel used in scissors contains varying amounts of carbon, depending on the quality of scissors. Surgical and other specialized scissors are made of stainless steel; cheaper scissors are made with softer steel that is cold pressed. Scissors come in many sizes and their blades are shaped and sharpened for specific functions that range from cutting fabric to cutting steel.