

Guide to Sharpening a Shechita Knife

2 parts of properly sharpening a knife:

1. Making a proper bevel (to achieve sharpness, חדות)
 - Use a lower grit stone which is more abrasive and scrapes off a layer of the knife's edge making it sharp.
 - Hold the knife at a low angle against the stone, but simultaneously be careful not to hold the knife too low or close to the stone. A 15 degree angle is recommended.
 - Keep in mind that the better the bevel, the better the foundation will be and the easier it will be to smooth out the knife afterwards.
2. Smoothing out the bevel (to achieve smoothness, חלקות)
 - Use a higher grit stone which is less abrasive and gives the bevel a polish, smoothing out even microscopic nicks that may have formed on the edge.

3 steps of sharpening and smoothing the knife:

Step 1:

- Use a 220 or 1,000 grit sharpening whetstone.
- Remember that all knives have two sides, labeled as "Side 1" and "Side 2."
- When sharpening, first focus on and complete the sharpening process on one side at a time.
- Only once the sharpening of one side is perfected should one move on to working on the second side.

Side 1

- ➔ First, run the knife back and forth across the entire stone at the correct angle which will cause the metal on Side 1 to bend over the edge of the knife and accumulate on Side 2.
- ➔ When a thick burr is created on Side 2 of the knife, which is uniform and felt evenly across the entire length of the knife, Side 1 of the knife is perfectly sharp. Only then move onto Side 2.

Side 2

- When working on this side of the knife, there will be a thick burr that accumulated from the sharpening of Side 1.
- Hold the knife flush against the stone, but at an angle that is a few degrees higher than what was used for Side 1.
- Run the knife back and forth across the whole stone. After a few strokes, the burr will be removed.
- Continue to move the knife in a back and forth motion across the stone until a slight burr has formed on Side 1 that is uniform across the whole length of the knife. This burr should be thin, not as thick as the first burr.

Step 2

- Use a 1,000 grit sharpening whetstone
- Repeat the same process as in Step 1 is repeated, but this time creating only a thin burr on each side by applying less pressure to the knife as it is moved across the stone.
- Continue switching from Side 1 to Side 2, moving the knife in light strokes, until no burr remains on either side.
- By the end of this step, the knife should have two sharp bevels with no burrs, achieving the status of *חדות*, sharpness.

Step 3

- Use a 6,000 or 8,000 grit polishing whetstone.
- The goal of this third step is to polish the edge of the blade to a mirror finish and achieve a flawless blade.
- Begin on Side 1 and move the blade in a back and forth motion across the stone until it reaches a mirror finish.
- Flip the knife to Side 2 and repeat the same motion until the blade is completely smooth, achieving the status of *חלקות*.
- It is also recommended to then continue polishing the stone with a 10,000 grit stone or a natural finishing stone, using a light stroke on a higher angle against the stone. (This should be done with a small amount of soap.)

You should now have a knife that is both sharp and smooth (*חד וחלק*) as required for a kosher shechita.