

The Sharpening Steel:

During use, the edge of the knife blade bends and folds. The sharpening steel works by realigning the blade edge, restoring its geometry or angle. The steel is made from a harder metal and pushes the blade's edge back into proper alignment.

Sharpening steels generally come in three grades or grits referred to as the cut; regular cut, fine cut, or polished. Steels are also available in three shapes: round, oval, and flat. Shape overall, has no effect on the steel's ability to realign the blade's edge.

All sharpening steels perform the same general function, of aligning the knife's edge. They do not sharpen the blade, they do however, depending on the steel's cut, remove a small amount of metal.

This method of using the steel realigns the edge by using downward strokes (the blade of the knife facing upward) lightly pulls the edge defects into proper alignment. After several strokes reverse the process (the blade of the knife facing downward) this pushes the edge into the steel firming up the cutting edge. Light even strokes are the key to maintaining your newly formed edge. Chef knives are generally maintained with an angle between 15 and 20 degrees.

After continued honing and maintenance the edge of the blade actually becomes too wide for the knife to maintain a sharp edge and becomes rounded. This occurs as the folded metal is continuously pushed into the blade. At this point the knife must be sharpened.

The Edge Test / Sharpness Test:

The edge test is by far the best method to test the sharpness of blade's edge. Rest the edge of the blade on something smooth, like a plastic pen (maintain the blade at a 45 degree angle). If the blade cuts into the pen without slipping the edge is sharp.

*** If you use your steel and hone your knives daily, using light even pressure, as described you will maximize the life of your knife.**