How To Tell If A Blade Is Bad or Not Worth Re-Sharpening

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Ever wonder if a blade is really worth re-sharpening, or worse yet, is it too damaged to be re-sharpened? This article will discuss different parts of the clipper blade, and what bad and good parts look like. It will help you make a better decisions on good or bad.

The Cutter Teeth

The Cutter is the top blade of the blade set, and is moved back and forth by the lever of the clipper. Whether the cutter fits larger blades (on left), or #40 blades (on right), all the teeth must be present on the cutter. On the ceramic cutters, pay special attention to the tips of the teeth. If they are chipped or broken they may not work because they are very blunt and will just snag or drag. Ceramic cutters are basically glass. Ceramic blades should not be used on dirty dogs that are not combed out. Knots in the hair and dirt in the coat will chip the tooth ends and cause the blade to drag. Steel cutters with missing teeth, or Ceramic cutters with broken tooth ends cannot be fixed, but they can be replaced with a new one making the blade good again.

The Cutter Rail
The Cutter Rail is on the underside of the blade and not seen very much. Its very important that its there because it the part of the cutter that does the cutting. It also keeps the cutter raised enough to give the hair that’s being cut a way to move out of the way. If the rail is ground flat like the ones in the above pictures, the cutter blade is no good anymore, it won’t cut. Using a blade with a cutter that has no rail may cause the blade to drag or snag the hair. Steel cutters are prone to being ground like this over time, ceramic cutters are not because they are sharpened a different way. A cutter like this cannot be fixed but can be replaced making it a good blade again.

The Comb Blade

The Comb, or bottom blade as its sometimes called, is the most important part of the blade. It determines the height of the cut and has two styles, Full and Skip Tooth. There is also another style by one manufacturer which is called “Show”. The comb blade on this type has twice as many teeth as the “Full” type.

What A Good Comb Blade Looks Like

This is a picture of a perfect comb blade not matter what size it is. The things to look at are these: It has no broken or missing teeth, and the front and rear rail is not ground flat. The front rail of the cutter and comb are the cutting surfaces of the blade. If any of the front rail is ground flat, it may cause the blades to snag or drag. You can inspect the rail of your blade by pushing the cutter to one side and looking at it, then to the other side to look at that side of the rail. The comb cannot be fixed or repaired, so the blade will have to be replaced. You can take the blade apart and save the cutter, spring, socket, and screws for spare parts.
Broken Comb Teeth

On #40 Blades  This is to the preference of the user. Most groomers will use a #40 blade with one tooth missing. It barely causes a line and may never cut skin. The blade on the right has several teeth in a row missing, this is a dangerous blade to use alone or under a guard comb. The comb cannot be fixed or repaired, so the blade will have to be replaced.

Blades Larger Than #40  A lot of groomers will use a blade with the very outside tooth missing because 95%+ of the blade is still good and may not cut skin. The blade on the right has teeth missing in the middle. Teeth missing like this will cause a line in the cut, and since there are two teeth missing next to each other, the blade may cut skin. The comb cannot be fixed or repaired, so the blade will have to be replaced.
When the Rail is ground flat as shown in these pictures above, the blade will drag or snag in the coat. Rail gives space between the bottom and top blades so there is space for hair to move out of the way of the cut, take this space away and it causes problems.
The blade on the left has only one side of the rail ground flat, the flat side will drag and the other will cut.
The blade on the right has no rail left at all, this blade will not cut at all.
The comb blade cannot be fixed or repaired, so the blade will have to be replaced.
NOTE: If the rail is very thin from previous sharpenings, it could look like the above blades AFTER it is sharpened this time. A good sharpener will note this for you.

During the sharpening process, when the blade comes down on the sharpening wheel its best for the rear of the blade to touch first, just like the heel of your foot touches first while walking. This prevents the teeth of the blade from getting rounded if they were to touch first. You can see the ground area at the rear of this comb blade, this will not affect the way the blade cuts so its OK to have it re-sharpened.
Other Parts Of The Clipper Blade

The Clipper Blade has other parts to it. These are: The Spring, The Screws, The Blade Guide, and The Socket. If any of these parts are broken or missing, and the cutter or comb has no broken teeth or missing rail, your blade is still OK to re-sharpen. These small parts can be replaced by any good sharpener.

If you have already determined your blade cannot be re-sharpened or is bad after it was sharpened, you can take the blade apart and save these parts in your spare parts can. They will fit any blade, so if you need one to replace one that is missing you have it already. Every good groomer keeps spare parts for their blades and clippers. It could be the difference in working or not working.

Check into a good blade care program and use oil as a lubricant and refrain from using spray coolant. Blade oil stays on the blade, coolants use silicon as a lubricant and will evaporate off a hot blade leaving it dry. When the cutting surfaces (the rails) are dry they will dull out in a few weeks, using blade oil could keep the blade sharp for months. *The less you have the blade sharpened the more rail you will save,* and the blade won’t have to be replaced for a long time.