

PremiumKnives.com has dedicated over three years to tracking down information on the use and care of straight razors. This task has been a challenging task for the PremiumKnives.com staff in that most of the publications which discussed straight razor shaving, techniques, and care went out of print in the early 1900's. We have discovered from our research that a straight razor will provide the ultimate shave, however the closeness of the shaving is dependant solely on the beard preparation and your skill with the razor.

Although almost every barber skilled and trained in the art of straight razor shaving has a different opinion of products, techniques, and razor care methods, we have gathered the most generally accepted practices for this information. You can be assured that our products, techniques, and care recommendations are based on staff's actual use of a straight razors and other fine shaving products. The following is general guidelines only in the care and use of your straight razor.

### **Frequently Asked Questions -FAQs**

- Are all PremiumKnives.com straight razors "Ready-to-Shave out of the box"?
- Are there different types of strops?
- What is the Strop used for?
- What is the Linen/Cotton side of the Strop used for?
- What is Strop Paste used for, what type is best, and how do I use it?
- How often should I Hone my Straight Razor and what does honing do?
- Should I buy a carbon or stainless steel blade?
- How do I keep my razor from rusting?

### **Are all PremiumKnives.com straight razors "Ready-to-Shave out of the box"?**

Yes! All straight razors sold by PremiumKnives.com come from the manufacturer ready for use. Initial stropping or honing is NOT necessary prior to use, however regular straight razor care should start after the second or third use.

### **Are there different types of strops?**

Yes. There are three basic types of strops or stropping methods which all produce the same result. Which stop or stropping method you choose is strictly personal choice.

- **Western Belt Style** - These are the hanging "Barber of Seville" style strops which most people are familiar with. These are typically 18" - 23" long with loops/handles to secure the strop during use. Linen backed strops are also available. The increased surface area of these strops shorten the strokes/time required for stropping. This strop is usually paired with a surgical Arkansas stone for periodic re-honing of the razor.
- **German Paddle** - An easy-to-use paddle style strop with a leather strop on one side and a fine Belgian or Danish water hone on the reverse side.
- **French Paddle** - A simple paddle style strop design from Thiers-Issard with a leather strop on both sides. Typically the smoothest side is used as the strop. A polishing abrasive strop paste is applied to the rougher side and acts as a super fine polishing hone. The idea of this method is that the razor is re-polished and re-stropped daily back to its original condition and therefore should not require actual re-sharpening. Semi-yearly re-honing may still be required for those with coarse beards.

### **What is the Strop used for?**

The razor strop is simply used to straighten and re-align the edge of the straight razor. Stropping does not remove any metal from the razor. With use, the extremely fine edge of any razor will become microscopically bent from cutting the coarse beard. Today we have disposable razors that we simply throw away when the edge becomes dull. With a straight razor the edge must be straightened, re-aligned and/or redefined after use. Stropping is one the most important steps in keeping your razor shaving sharp.

A straight razor should always be stropped just prior to and after shaving. Those individuals with coarse or thick beards may need to strop their razors once or even several times during a shaving session. The better the quality of steel in the straight razor, the less you will likely need to strop during your shave. There are different styles of razor strops. Some are the classic belt style with and without linen/cotton backing and other are paddle style strops that incorporate 2, 3, or 4 sides with strop, stone, rouges, or simply single or double sided leather. The French style strops are unique in that the strops normally are a paddle style with leather on both sides, one which strop paste is applied to and another side which is left untreated as a final strop.

### **What is the Linen/Cotton side of the Strop used for?**

Some strops have linen or cotton backings. These backings are used to heat the razor via friction to make the razor's edge more malleable and easier to strop. The same technique used to strop a razor should be used on the linen or cotton side of the strop just prior to stropping. If your strop does not have a canvas or linen backing you can accomplish this by running hot water over the razor blade prior to stropping. Rouge or paste should NEVER be applied to the cotton or linen side of the strop.

### **What is Strop Paste used for, what type is best, and how do I use it?**

Strop paste is a non-abrasive leather conditioner that is used to protect and condition the leather strop and improves stropping by causing additional drag on the razor during stropping.

Strop paste should be applied initially to any new strop and completely worked into the leather. One small tube should condition a strop for approximately a year. The final appearance of the strop will be a little darker in color and with a waxy and oily look to the leather. Every 3-4 months strop paste should be re-applied once less drag is felt on the blade during stropping.

Some manufacturers do produce a professional abrasive in yellow, red, brown, black pastes/rouges or chalky white pastes, however these pastes can be difficult to use properly. A professional barber that practices straight razor shaving may have four or more strops all with various grades of abrasive pastes, final and regular stropping is always performed on a strop with a standard non-abrasive strop paste. If you are interested in using a multiple grit strop, the Jemico J45 4-sided strop paddle features a fine water stone, pre-applied red rouge, pre-applied black polishing paste, and a fine leather finishing strop.

PremiumKnives.com recommends our J55 non-abrasive leather conditioner strop paste for use on any of our fine leather strops on the finished leather side only. Strop paste should never be applied to the linen side of the strop. If complete monthly reconditioning of the straight razor is desired, we recommend the J45 Strop paddle that features a four side paddle with a fine water stone, pre-applied red rouge, pre-applied black polishing paste, and a fine leather finishing strop.

### **How often should I Hone my Straight Razor and what does honing do?**

Hone as little as possible. A razor should be honed after the razor starts to drag on the face during a shaving session even after normal stropping has been performed on the razor. A normal honing schedule is to re-hone every 3-4 weeks, however a thicker or heavier beard may require more frequent honing of your razor. Where stropping re-aligns and straightens the edge, honing re-establishes the fine edge of the razor by removing metal from the razor, so it is best to hone your razor as little as possible. A single aggressive honing session of your razor can ruin the blade permanently. PremiumKnives.com carries several hones and hone/strop combination paddles. One of our most popular models is the J40 Strop and Stone paddle.

### **Should I buy a carbon or stainless steel blade?**

As a rule the higher the carbon content of a blade the sharper it will get and the longer the steel will hold the edge. As a result, almost every straight razor is made of low-stainless high-carbon steel. Even the "Stainless Steel" straight razors are very high in carbon and are not truly stainless or rust proof. Stainless steel straight razors do require less upkeep than a low-stainless high-carbon steel razor, however you will give up some of the edge holding capabilities that a higher carbon steel will provide and the stainless steel can be more difficult to re-hone and strop.

### How do I keep my razor from rusting?

Contact with salt and dirt from your face will rapidly produce rust on your straight razor if not cared for. With proper care a straight razor can last many generations with no rust build up by following three simple rules.

1. Rinse and dry your razor thoroughly after use. Never put your razor away wet or in a closed container until fully air dried.
2. Keep the blade lubricated with a light grade oil or high tech protectant. One of the best carbon and stainless steel protectants is the non-oil based Tuff-Glide from Sentry Solutions which bonds at a molecular level with the steel to prevent your razor from rusting. Tuff-Glide was developed for the Navy Seal teams to protect and lubricate their equipment in high salt and corrosive environments. The PremiumKnives.com staff has been using Tuff-Glide on its personal razors and pocket knives and has proven itself as one of the best lubricants and protectants available, performing well even several weeks after application. Apply a light -water displacing oil to the blade after each shaving session or apply a product such as Tuff-Glide once every 2-3 weeks to a clean dry razor.
3. Any surface rust should be removed from the razor immediately with a polishing cloth or steel wool. Be careful not to rub away any gold leaf or gilding.

### How do I Strop and Hone my straight razor?

Applies to both belt-style and paddle style strops

#### Stropping -

- Rinse the razor to assure that it is clean before starting.
- Open the razor as shown.
- Hold the strop handle with tension. The flatter the strop, the better the strop.
- Place the spine of the razor (NOT the cutting edge) on the strop about one-two inches from either end of the strop with the razor's edge facing toward the closest strop end.
- Gently role the spine of the razor so that the edge of the razor is lowered on the strop and now touches the strop.
- Apply only enough pressure to keep the razor's edge and spine in contact with the strop at all times. Excess pressure could damage your razor's edge.
- You will be drawing the razor, spine first, up and down the strop. Always remember that you want to move the razor away from the edge and in a direction that will not cut your strop in half.
- When you reach the end of the strop do not lift the razor. Role the razor on its spine to change directions. Lifting the razor from the strop while moving will decrease stropping effectiveness and could damage the edge.
- Repeat this process 10-15 times.



### Linen/Cotton

The linen/cotton side of your strop can be used before stropping to quicken and improve the stropping of the razor. Use the same technique as stropping. Strop on the linen/cotton side 8-10 times then the leather strop side 8-10 times.



### Honing

Note: All straight razors sold by PremiumKnives.com come from the manufacturer ready for use. Initial stropping or honing is NOT necessary prior to use, however regular straight razor care should start after the second or third use.

- Hone using the same technique as stropping except the razor's edge will be moving into the stone. Opposite the direction used during stropping. As shown in the diagram.
- Open the razor as shown.
- Hold the hone firmly or place flat on a stable platform. Never use oil on your razor hone. Add 2-3 teaspoons of water to hone, spread the water on the hone and allow the water to soak in. Excess water on the stone will not cause problems.
- Place the spine of the razor (NOT the cutting edge) on the hone about one inch from either end of the hone with the razor's edge facing toward the middle of the hone.
- Gently role the spine of the razor so that the razor's edge is lowered onto the hone and now touches the hone.
- Apply only enough light pressure to keep the razor's edge and spine in contact with the hone at all times. DO NOT grind the razor into the stone, this will damage your razor.
- You will be drawing the razor, edge first, up and down the hone. Always remember that you want to move the razor in the direction of the razors edge (opposite of the direction of stropping.)
- When you reach the end of the hone do not lift the razor. Role the razor on its spine to change directions. Lifting the razor from the hone while moving will damage the edge.
- Repeat this process 10-15 times.
- Complete the honing process by stropping the razor 10-15 times.

