



## Cutting Edge Safety Tips

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Utility knives are called that for two reasons: they can be applied to a wide variety of tasks and when a blade gets dull there's no need to stop for sharpening. Just remove the dull blade and replace it with a new one.

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Utility knives are designed for safety, but no design is foolproof. The blades should be retracted all the way into the body of the knife when not in use. However they can be accidentally or inadvertently exposed and that can lead to cuts and puncture wounds. Anyone who has ever pocketed a utility knife that they mistakenly thought was closed will probably have a cautionary tale to tell.

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Self-retracting utility knives add an important safety feature to the design. Like standard utility knives they can be quickly adjusted to different cutting depths and will let the blade retract completely into the handle when not in use. The difference is that as pressure on the blade is released, it automatically retracts completely into the handle, where it is stored until future use.

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Here are some safety tips that apply when using any utility knife:

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- Before starting, be sure that your blade is properly seated and that the knife is properly closed.
- Always use a sharp blade. Dull blades require more force and are more likely to slip than sharp ones. Change your blade whenever it starts to tear rather than cut.
- Protect your eyes. Wear safety eyewear when you are working with any hand tools, including knives.
- Always keep your free hand away from the line of cut.

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- When making cuts on a surface below you, stand or kneel to one side of the line of the cut.

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- Always pull the knife toward you when making a cut on a flat surface. Because pulling motions are stronger and more positive than pushing motions, your knife is less likely to slip.

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- When using a straight edge to guide a cut, either clamp it down or keep your free hand well away from the cutting path of the knife. Be sure the straight edge is thick enough to prevent the knife from "riding up" over the edge.

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- Utility knife blades are brittle and can snap easily. Don't bend them or apply side loads to them by using them to open cans or pry loose objects.

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- Patience pays off when using a knife to cut through thick materials. Make several passes, cutting a little deeper into the material with each pass.
- Many tasks require a knife edge but not a sharp point. For these tasks you can add protection against puncture wounds by using a rounded-tip blade.