

The Glasgow School of Art

GSA Guide to Safe Use of Craft Knives

January 2019

Policy Control

Title	GSA Guide to Safe Use of Craft Knives
Date Approved	February 2019
Approving Bodies	Occupational Health & Safety Committee
Implementation Date	February 2019
Supersedes	GSA Guide to Safe Use of Craft Knives (2016) Precautions When Handling Sharps (2009) Safe Disposal of Hypodermic Needles and Sharps Guidance Note (2009)
Supporting Policy	Occupational Health and Safety Policy; Procedure for Reporting Accidents, Incidents and Near Miss Events; GSA Guide to First Aid Provision
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Benchmarking	Edinburgh College of Art - Avoiding Cuts from Craft Knives; Health and Safety Executive – How to Reduce Hand Knife Injuries

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1. Introduction

Within Glasgow School of Art (GSA), the majority of reported accidents involve cuts or lacerations. These are commonly caused by craft knives and occur frequently in both studio and workshop spaces. Whilst many of these injuries are not classified as 'Specified Injuries' under The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR), they do impact on those involved, particularly on their ability to carry out work as normal.

For the purpose of this guidance, the term 'craft knife' includes scalpels and other open blade cutting instruments such as Stanley knives.

This guidance aims to protect the health and safety of all students and staff within GSA, ensuring that all GSA practices are inclusive and accessible. Any student/member of staff requiring any support should speak to their Programme Leader/Line Manager in the first instance.

2. Minimising the Risk of Injury

This guidance is based on the hierarchy of control which is central to all health and safety regulations in the UK. It should be highlighted to all GSA staff and students at risk of injury from using craft knives during activities, and is intended to assist them in minimising the risks. Appendix 1 contains an illustrated step by step guide for the safe use of craft knives.

The following should also be considered before working with a craft knife.

2.1 Avoid Using Craft Knives

Wherever possible, the requirement to use craft knives should be avoided by:

- Using appropriate sized materials, minimising the need to cut
- Buying pre-cut materials

2.2 Consider Alternatives

Where cutting cannot be avoided, there may be other alternatives to knives such as:

- Laser cutter
- Desktop trimmer
- Guillotine
- Scissors (of appropriate size)

2.3 Using Appropriate Equipment

Where alternative means of cutting are not practical, additional equipment – such as below – should be considered to ensure craft knives are used safely:

- Where possible, use retractable blades to cut
- All equipment should be checked before use to ensure it is in good condition (e.g. ensure blades are sharp, handles are sturdy etc.)

- Sufficiently sized cutting mats or boards should be used
- A safety rule should be used to guide the blade and to keep it away from your fingers

2.4 Safe Use of Equipment

When cutting using a craft knife - even with other appropriate equipment as mentioned previously - the following safe cutting practices are essential:

- Induction should cover use and maintenance of craft knives and should be given to all students/staff who use this equipment.
- If you are unsure of how to use cutting equipment safely, students should speak to their tutor and/or a member of technical support staff. Members of staff who are unsure should speak to their line manager.
- Be aware of others in the area that may cause a distraction.
- Concentrate!

3. Storage of Equipment

The risk of injury from craft knives is not limited to their use. Poor practice – such as leaving craft knives lying on work surfaces or students/staff carrying them from one place to another – can lead to injuries to both the user and to others. To prevent this, you should:

- Always cover the blade of a knife when not in use e.g. retract blade, proprietary covers, tubing sleeves, cork or robust storage case.
- Never leave open knives unattended on desks or workstations.
- Never leave knives on floors, chairs etc. where others might not expect to find them.
- Never put unprotected blades in your bag/pocket.
- Provide suitable disposal points for blades e.g. sharps containers

4. Maintaining Equipment

Correct maintenance of craft knives can reduce the risk of injury when using the equipment. The following points should be considered:

- Particular care should be taken when changing blades on ‘surgical’ style scalpels – make sure you always use the appropriate tools to do so.
- Ensure correct disposal of blades in sharps containers provided.

5. Accidents, Incidents and Near Misses

If a student or member of staff suffers a craft knife injury, they should alert their class tutor immediately and seek first aid assistance where necessary.

All injuries involving craft knives should be reported through [GSA's Procedure for Reporting Accidents, Incidents and Near Misses](#).

6. Further Information

There are a wide range of publications and materials available relating to the safe use of craft knives in the workplace. See links below for further information.

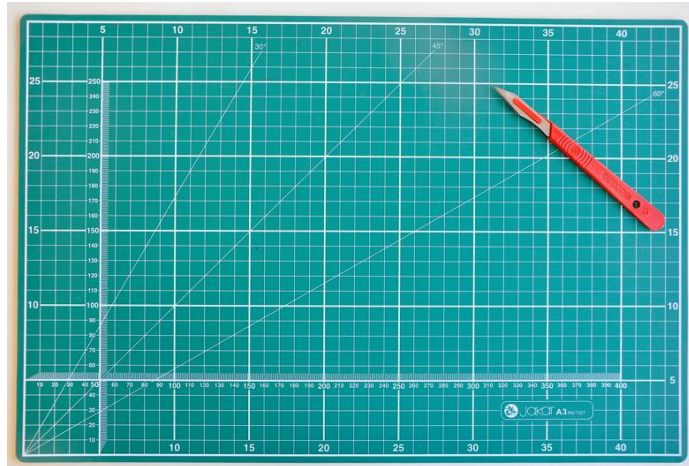
- HSE – Hand Knives: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/textiles/hand-knives.htm>
- HSE – Sharps Injuries – What you need to do: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/needlesticks/actions.htm>
- St Andrews First Aid – Wounds and Bleeding: https://www.firstaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/wounds_and_bleeding.pdf

APPENDIX 1: - SAFE USE OF CRAFT KNIVES

The following steps and photographs aim to ensure the safe use of craft knives within GSA:

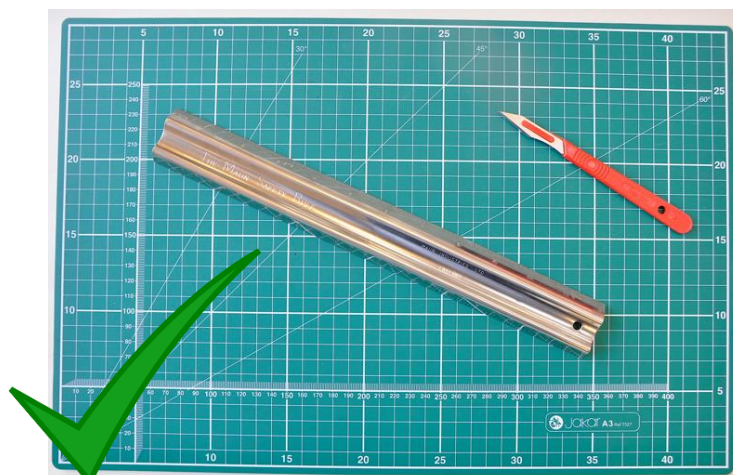
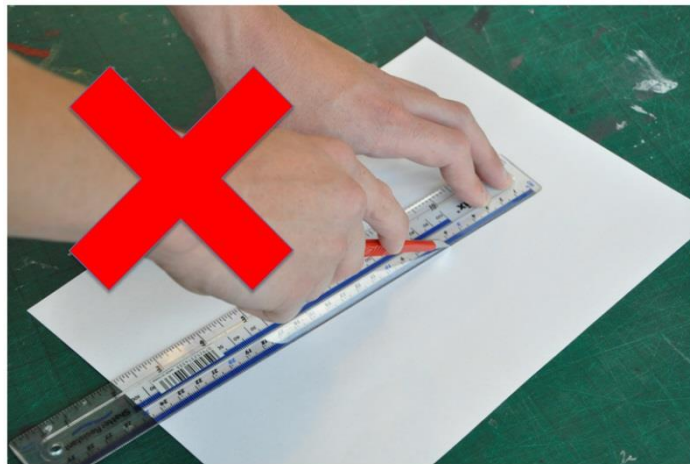
STEP 1:

Always use a cutting mat.



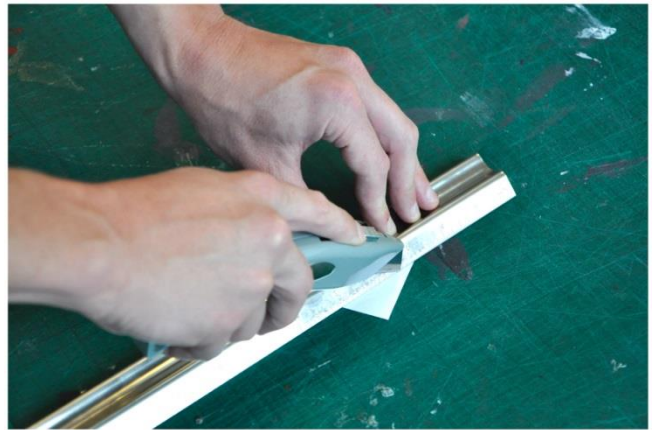
STEP 2:

Always use a metal safety ruler as a straight line guide. NEVER use a plastic or wooden ruler as a cutting guide.



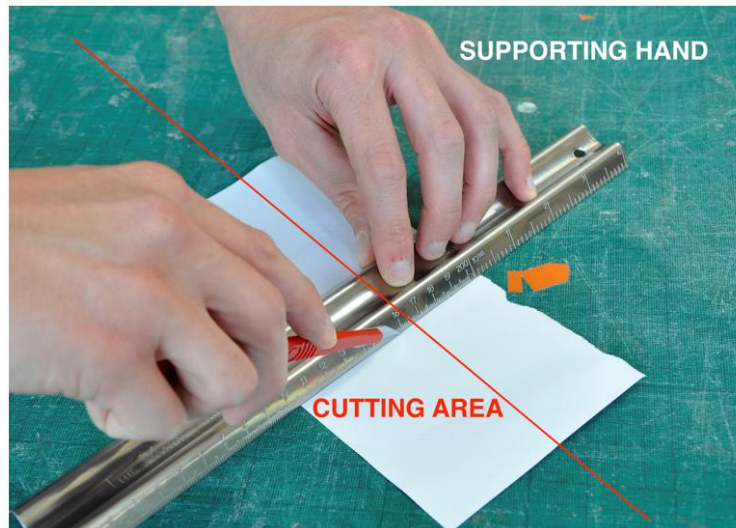
STEP 3:

Always use a craft knife suitable for the task you are carrying out.



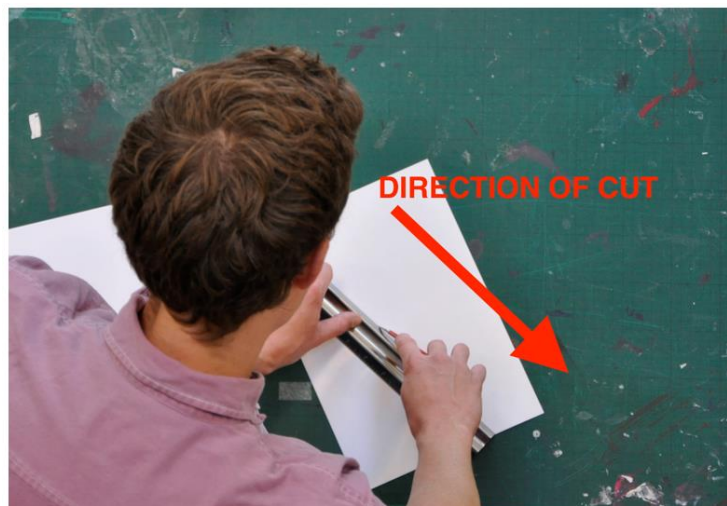
STEP 4:

Always keep your supporting hand away from the blade.



STEP 5:

Always cut away from yourself.



STEP 6:

Always cover blades when they are not in use.



REMEMBER:

When cutting using a craft knife - even with other appropriate equipment as mentioned previously - the following safe cutting practices are essential:

- Training/induction should be given to all students/staff using craft knives and should cover general use and maintenance of craft knives.
- If you are unsure of how to use cutting equipment safely, students should speak to their tutor and/or a member of technical support staff. Members of staff who are unsure should speak to their line manager.
- Be aware of others in the area that may cause a distraction.
- Concentrate!