A sharpening steel works on a very fundamental principle. Quite simply, it provides a grinding surface which is harder than the blade of the knife to be sharpened; this allows sharpening to take place.

The surface of a sharpening steel can be finished or “cut” several different ways.

**COARSE “SPIRAL” CUT**
The coarse “spiral” cut (also known as the “British” or “helical” cut) sharpening steel is ideal for putting an edge on a blunt knife blade.

**PRECISION CUT**
The “precision” cut (also known as the “Continental” cut) sharpening steel has unbroken cuts running the length of the steel. It is ideally suited for maintaining a good blade edge.

**POLISHED FINISH**
The “polished” finish sharpening steel is perfectly smooth and is used for honing a knife blade. Honing refines or polishes the edge of a knife blade.

**COMBINATION SPIRAL/PRECISION CUT**
Comprised of both the “spiral” and the “precision” cuts, the “Doublesharp” steel is ideal for restoring very dull knife blades.

**DIAMOND STEELS**
In recent years, diamond steels have gained popularity. They are coated with ultra-fine 100% diamond abrasives and simultaneously lightly hone as they realign a knife edge.

Which sharpening steel to use depends on the sharpening job at hand. We recommend owning both “Doublesharp” and “Precision Cut” steels to ensure that you have the proper tools available when you need them.

**SHARPENING STEEL LENGTH**
Sharpening steels come in lengths ranging from three to 14 inches (7.5 cm to 36 cm). As a rule, a sharpening steel should be at least as long as the length of the knife blade being sharpened.

**SHARPENING STEEL SHAPE**
Sharpening steels can be round or oval. Round sharpening steels are generally preferred, while oval shaped sharpening steels provide a larger sharpening surface.

**CLEANING**
A sharpening steel may become soiled through use and develop a grease barrier. This grease barrier will prevent the steel from “biting” and the knife will not be sharpened properly. To avoid a dirt build up, wash the sharpening steel regularly in hot sudsy water and dry immediately to avoid rusting. Polypropylene handles may be sterilized by boiling the handle in water.