

# PAPER CUTTER SAFETY

Avoid accidents and injuries by following these tips when using a paper cutter.

## PAPER CUTTER HAZARDS

Paper cutters are fitted with very sharp blades and are designed to exert significant force to cut large quantities of paper. Potential hazards include cuts, lacerations and amputations.



*Image source: triumphcutter.com*

## TYPES OF PAPER CUTTERS

Types of paper cutters include guillotine, stack cutters and paper trimmers. Guillotine paper cutters have an exposed blade and are inherently more dangerous, while a paper trimmer or a stack cutter are inherently safer to use. See the next page for more information on the safety features of each type.

## REPORT INJURIES

Report all injuries to your supervisor and submit a report via the [UW Online Accident Reporting System \(OARS\)](#).

## GENERAL SAFETY TIPS

### Before cutting

- Cutter should be placed on a stable, flat surface.
- Do not carry the cutter by the cutting handle or blade.
- Keep loose clothing, jewelry and hair away from cutting blade.
- Do not use a cutter when you are distracted.
- Ensure the blade guard is in place before use.
- Do not use a guillotine cutter if it does not have a functioning guard, latch/lock and tension spring.

### While cutting

- Don't cut more paper than is allowed by the capacity rating of the cutter.
- Maintain a firm grip on the blade handle.
- Keep your fingers behind the guard at all times.
- Never let your hand go underneath the blade.
- Begin to cut by bringing the blade down slowly.
- Don't try to catch the paper as it's being cut.
- Follow all proper operating instructions.

### After cutting

- If any paper falls on the floor, pick it up before it becomes a trip hazard.
- Place the cutting handle in the down position and secure the blade latch when not in use.
- When changing blades, follow blade-change instructions and use the correct blade-changing tools.

# SAFETY FEATURES

## Guillotine paper cutters

Guillotine paper cutters have an exposed blade on the underside of a handle that is raised and lowered to cut the paper. The exposed blade creates an increased risk of injury compared to other types of paper cutters. University units with guillotine paper cutters should replace them with a safer paper cutter, such as a paper trimmer.

**Guillotine paper cutters must have a blade guard, blade latch and functioning tension spring** to prevent injuries. If you are using a guillotine type paper cutter without all of the following safety features, immediately remove it from service.

### Blade guard

The blade guard can be metal or plastic and should prevent users from putting their fingers near either side of the blade. A blade guard is a necessary safety feature available on guillotine cutters.

### Blade latch/lock

The blade latch or lock secures the blade in a closed position so the blade cannot be accessed. The latch will must be moved or removed before the paper cutter can be used.

### Tension spring

The tension spring is usually attached to the rear of the blade. It prevents the blade from being pulled downward by gravity when the handle is released.



## PAPER CUTTERS MUST HAVE A GUARD

Safety guards are designed to help keep your hands and fingers away from the blade.



Image source: [Olympia, WA School District](#)

## Paper trimmer

A rotary paper trimmer has a blade contained inside a track that the user slides across the paper to trim it. It is capable of cutting as many pieces of paper at one time as a guillotine type cutter. Paper trimmers are safer than guillotine cutters because the blade is never exposed.



Image source: [carlmfg.com](#)

## Stack cutters

Stack cutters, or ream cutters, can easily slice right through three inches of paper at once. Safety features include a hand shield and two-hand operation. The hand shield is a protective shield that keeps hands and other body parts away from the blade. Make sure the protective shield is in place and not damaged before use.



Image source: [vevor.com](#)

Contact EH&S at [ehsdept@uw.edu](mailto:ehsdept@uw.edu) for more information.