

Splicing Scissors Review by Pete Bingham, Supernova Class Secretary

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If you want to do some splicing of your control lines on your Supernova, then you will need some way of cutting the ropes. There are various ways of doing this, including Stanley knives, scalpel blades, but these don't work very well as ropes made from dyneema and other braided lines are very hard to cut. It's better to invest in a pair of dedicated scissors to produce a nice clean cut with the minimum of fuss. However, your normal kitchen scissors 'just won't cut it', so you will need to buy a pair of 'special' scissors for your toolkit.

There are various brands on the market but the key requirements are:

- High carbon stainless steel blades
- Micro-serrated cutting edge to help grip the cord
- Comfortable handles as invariably it will be cold, wet, windy when you are splicing on site.

To provide a bit of guidance, I've reviewed 3 brands of scissors at three price points:

1. D-Splicer D-16 scissors (various Marine chandlers, around £35)
2. Electrician's scissors (CK brand used for cutting flex, widely available £15 e.g. Screwfix)
3. Angler's fishing braid scissors (e.g. Go Outdoors' Leeda brand £3.59)

These are shown in the picture below.



The scissors are reviewed on the following (in order of importance):

1. Ability to do the job

2. Ease of handling and feel (a lot of splicing is done outdoors where your boat is, with cold hands)
3. Build Quality (you don't want them falling apart)

Review

I tested the scissors by cutting a variety of ropes commonly used in dinghy sailing, 5mm Dyneema Rope DSK99 with outer braid, 5mm Excel D12 Max SK78, 4mm Marlow Excel Control (as used on control lines), and bungee cord of various diameters.

D-Splicer D-16 (for up to 8mm ropes):

These are the most expensive at £35, which is very expensive even with the usual 'Chandlery mark ups'. Specially designed for cutting super fibres like Dyneema®, Vectran® and Stirotex® which are one of the hardest fabrics to cut. The blades of these scissors are laser cut and have an excellent grinding profile. They had better be good. First impressions are that they are well made – a precise cutting action with decently large finger holds. The plastic handle is one piece moulded with no sharp edges. The pivot is riveted with a nyloc type backnut, but it's not possible to loosen or tighten the pivot, if ever that was needed. Overall, a well-made pair of scissors.

Verdict: Cut all ropes well with a clean cut. Cut with controlled pressure even on 6mm SK99 braid. Not much finger force needed to cut. Gives a very clean cut on softer materials and thick 8mm bungee cord.

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|------------------------|-----|--------------------|
| Ability to do the job: | 9.0 | |
| Ease of handling/feel: | 9.0 | |
| Build Quality: | 9.0 | Overall score: 90% |

CK Electrician's Scissors (92001):

These are widely available, from Screwfix at £14.99, Amazon, Ebay, Rooster etc. Used for cutting flex, network cables, tape, cable ties etc. Usefully they have the micro-serrated blades. Comes with a belt pouch, which is next to useless though as it is too stiff. The handles are yellow and red plastic (useful if you drop them in long grass), although quite bulky and slightly uncomfortable to hold in practice. The pivot bolt is a torx-headed bolt with a 10mm bolt on the reverse, so it is possible to dismantle and hone the blades if you ever had to (but not sure this might destroy the micro-serrations).

Verdict: Cut all ropes almost as well as the D-16. They did struggle with the 5mm SK99 Dyneema, needing 2 cuts to get it done as they tended to chew through. Slightly more cutting effort needed than the D-16s, but acceptable.

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| Ability to do the job: | 7.8 | |
| Ease of handling/feel: | 7.5 | |
| Build Quality: | 9.0 | Overall score: 80% |

Leeda Fishing Braid Scissors:

These used to be available from Go Outdoors for £3.59 but I'm not sure if you can get this specific brand now. Another brand from the same retailer is Wychwood at the same price, but with much smaller finger holes. Designed for cutting fishing line braid at much smaller diameters than we use for dinghies. Other on-line brands are available at similar prices (£5). The Leedas have a handy hook

sharpening insert – though not so handy for us sailing folks. They look and feel at the cheap end of the scale, and don't feel nearly as robust as the CK's. The pivot bolt is a machine screw both sides. I also get the feeling that for heavy duty cutting, these won't last.

Verdict: An inferior cut to the other scissors. A considerable amount of finger pressure is needed to cut all the rope types – although of course they are designed to cut fishing braid not dinghy ropes. Did not cut the SK99 braid at all well – needed multiple cuts to do it and the finished result was rough.

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| Ability to do the job: | 6.2 | |
| Ease of handling/feel: | 6.5 | |
| Build Quality: | 5.0 | Overall score: 60% |

As an example of how the most expensive and least expensive compared, here is a photo showing some SK78 cut with a single stroke. The better D-16 cut is on the right:



Conclusion:

If you plan to do a lot of splicing/rope cutting, and budget/cost is not an issue, then I would choose the D-16 D Splicer scissors. Personally on performance, I think they would be hard to beat. However, you would need to be a serious splicer to really justify having these. If they were priced at £19.99 then they would be my first choice, but £35 is seriously expensive.

However, for value-for-money, the CK scissors would be my natural choice. The cut isn't quite up to the D-16s, but it's not far behind. You can buy 3 pairs for the price of the D-16s. They are durable, and if you lose them or lend them to someone and don't get them back, it shouldn't upset you too much. They are also easily available.

Finally, the much cheaper Leeda scissors are best avoided for cutting dinghy ropes. Maybe have a pair anyway as they are so cheap, but keep them in your toolbox for lending out, or for cutting bungee (where they do a decent job). For Dyneema, it's a NO.

I hope this has been useful.

Happy Splicing!

Pete Bingham
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