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## Are safety razors good for shaving head

A Gillette safety razor.

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Shaving your own head can be pretty tricky. When you’re shaving your face, the mirror gives you all the perspective you need. Shaving your head requires a little bit more confidence. You need to be sure that you’re removing every hair evenly, and without causing unnecessary irritation to your scalp. Safety razors will give you much better results than cartridge razors, but they’re also trickier to use. Cartridge razors are designed to make it a little more difficult to mess up. Safety razors, like the name implies, are a little more accident-proof than straight razors. That doesn’t mean they’re completely foolproof. Prepping your head correctly and going in with an effective strategy will help you achieve a shave just as smooth and flawless as The Rock. Practice certainly helps. If you currently have hair on your head that’s longer than 1/8th of an inch, don’t go in there with the razor. You’re going to make a mess and miss a bunch of spots, clogging up your safety razor and dulling the blade rapidly. Use electric clippers to buzz your head first, getting it as short as possible. The shorter your hair is, the easier it will be to shave. Buzzing first also helps to prevent remorse. If you aren’t sure how you’ll look with a bald head, buzz it shorter and shorter. If you feel like you want to stop, you still have time to change your mind before all your hair is gone. If you’re still into the idea before you’ve gotten to the shaving process, proceed. Before you begin shaving, you need to have a clean head. Shampooing your head will rinse away the hair clippings from buzzing your head and help to slough off any dandruff or flakes that accumulated under your hair. Take a hot shower and give yourself a scalp massage to prepare your head. You should continue shampooing your head, even when it’s fully bald. Your scalp produces and accumulates a lot of oils that need to be routinely washed away, just like any other part of your body. Keeping your head warm and moisturized throughout your shave will minimize the risk for irritation. Using hot lather with a coconut oil enriched shaving cream will protect your head and help your safety razor glide. That’s why barbers use hot lather and superior shaving cream when they shave your head at the barber shop. You may want to have a mirror behind you and a mirror in front of you. Positioning a mirror behind you can prevent the reflection of your head into the mirror in front of you, allowing you to see what you’re doing without climbing onto the bathroom counter or awkwardly contorting yourself. If you don’t have a way to set up two mirrors, it should be relatively easy to feel where you’ve placed the lather. Liberally applying it in gentle circular motions will prevent dry spots. When shaving your head with a safety razor, you want to start from the center of your head and shave downwards, following the grain. Going against the grain will only increase the risk for razor burn, razor bumps, and other kinds of shaving irritation. Use a new safety razor blade to shave your head. You want it to be as sharp as possible. Even if you’ve only shaved your face with the blade, it’s still going to be dull from the coarser hair of your beard. Safety razor blades only cost a few pennies, so if you feel as though the blade is dulling a little bit as you continue to shave, you might as well swap it out again. A scalp free from irritation is certainly worth a dime. Hold the safety razor at a 45 degree angle to your head. Depending on how comfortable you are with your safety razor, you can hold your head still and gradually adjust the angle with your wrist as you make your way down. Some men prefer to slightly move their heads. Do what feels most comfortable and intuitive to you. The skin on your head is going to move around a lot more than the skin on your face, and this is something you need to keep in mind while you’re shaving. It’s easier to shave your head when the skin is taut, and holding it still with your free hand is the easiest way to achieve that problem. Pressing two fingers to your temple and gently tugging down can help you achieve a smooth shave in a single pass around your ear. When it comes time to shave the back of your head, holding your chin to your chest will naturally stretch the skin a little tighter. After every pass, thoroughly rinse your safety razor with warm running water to dislodge trapped hairs and remove excess shaving cream. When you’re done, rinse your head off and towel it dry. Feel and look for any patches that you may have missed. Apply more hot lather to those spots and go again. Don’t reshawe your entire head just because you’ve missed a few patches. Keep your second pass localized. Rinse again and moisturize your head. Don’t forget to apply sunscreen to your head. It can and will develop sunburn very easily. A UV blocking hat is helpful for sunny days where you’ll be outside a lot. A safety razor will give you the smoothest possible shave for both your head and your face. It just takes a little bit of patience, time, and maneuvering to work out the perfect technique. LTHR’s countertop hot lather machine will dispense the perfect lather to moisturize and protect your face and scalp while softening your beard and hair to help you achieve the perfect shave every time. Sources: How to Care for a Shaved Head: 6 Tips from the Pros | St Baldrick’s Foundation Pseudofolliculitis Barbae | American Osteopathic College of Dermatology Ask the Expert: How Can I Protect My Scalp Better? | Skin Cancer Foundation Ask most men whether they’re bearded or subtly stubbled — about what they use to shave, and they’ll likely all reply with some twist on the same basic tool: a cartridge razor with disposable blades, either from a drugstore brand like Gillette or Schick, or a newer, direct-to-consumer company like Harry’s and Dollar Shave Club. But, according to most of the professional barbers we spoke to, the best way to shave at home — and avoid the irritation commonly caused by cartridge razors — is actually with a safety razor, a tool that has appeared exactly the same since it debuted in 1903. Unlike a cartridge razor, which can only use blades from the same brand, a safety razor features a single double-sided blade, and any company’s blades are compatible with it, explains Mike Gilman, founder of Grooming Lounge. “It gets closer, is less irritating, and is infinitely cheaper than cartridge counterparts,” he says, calling safety razors “the best long-term solution for a regular shaver.” A cartridge razor typically has three blades — the first will do most of the cutting and once it gets dull, it’ll start to pull hair up, says Brian Porteous, owner of Hitting Barbershop in Portland. “That’s what causes irritation and ingrown hair.” A safety razor’s single blade makes it safer on the skin. Up front, a safety razor seems pricier, but as Peter Solomon, the owner of Boston’s Tweed Barbers, tell us, the blades for safety razors “generally cost 10 to 20 cents each — while cartridges tend to go for at least \$2 to \$3 each — so the lifetime savings are significant.” Since a safety razor’s blade isn’t locked in at a certain angle, as it is with a cartridge razor, it’s easier to nick yourself if you don’t slow down, according to Paul Labrecque Salon and Skincare Spa master barber Brittany Raposo. But almost all the barbers we spoke to assured us that once you get your technique down (which really shouldn’t take long and, as barber Karac Riveau notes, can be practiced by putting some shaving cream on an inflated balloon), it’s unlikely you’ll want to use anything but a safety razor. To find the best safety razors and blades — and get tips for how to use them — we spoke with 17 barbers. Read on for all their recommendations, as well as for their tricks of the trade. Merkur 34C Heavy-duty Short-Handle Safety Razor German razor company Merkur came up more than any other brand by far, praised for its long history, good price point, and reputation for quality manufacturing. Merkur makes a wide range safety razors, but they’re perhaps best known for this three-inch, roughly three-ounce model that four of the experts specifically named as a great safety razor for beginners. Its handle is the shortest of any razor on this list, but Porteous says that’s part of what makes it such a good option for someone new to safety-razor shaving. The shorter handle is “wide and well-balanced,” he notes, so it’s “easier to grip” and more maneuverable. “With a longer handle, some people might feel they have a little less control over the shave,” adds Solomon. Barber Mike Sposito, another fan of the 34C, compares it to using a baseball bat: “The shorter the handle, the tighter the grip and the greater your control.” Using it, Sposito adds, is super simple. “You unscrew the button, the top pops open, you pop the single blade in, and screw it down again.” Incidentally, it’s not just barbers who told us they favor this razor: Former Strategist writer David Notis has been using his Merkur 34C for at least six years. In addition to the way a razor feels in your hand, Solomon says one of the most important qualities to consider is the “aggressiveness” of the shave, “which is largely determined by how much space exists between the blade and the safety bar of the razor.” The Merkur 34C is a closed-comb razor, a style that Solomon and all the other experts say is generally best for beginners because it “offers a more protected shave,” at least as far as safety razors are concerned. With open-comb razors, the blade is more exposed, which some say provides a closer shave, but will increase the risk of nicks and irritation. Edwin Jagger Double Edge Safety Razor, Short Handle Two of our barbers praised British shaving company Edwin Jagger’s safety razors, specifically this one, which has the same mechanism as the Merkur 34C but at a more-affordable price (the price includes five blades from Derby, a brand many barbers endorsed, which come with the razor). The two experts who recommend this safety razor each add that they’ve given it to other guys as a gift, underscoring their endorsement of it. Joey Tascia, a barber at Brooklyn’s Persons of Interest, says the razor is heavy enough to remind you that “you have something powerful in your hand, which makes you less likely to cut yourself.” Mark Miguez, who works at Friendly a Barber, explains how the razor’s weight, combined with its shorter handle, make it user-friendly. “The handle is light and small, but the head is heavy, which keeps me from taking a chance and cutting myself, while still giving me that control,” he says. Miguez actually switched to using this razor after his skin reacted badly to shaving with Gillette and Bic cartridge razors, and tells us he’s experienced no irritation since he started using it. King C. Gillette Double Edge Safety Razor Monica Davis, a professional hairstylist and the founder of the MyStraightener blog, likes how “perfectly balanced” this razor is — it’s based on the brand’s original designs and features a ribbed steel handle for a better hold. As our barbers hinted, it can take some time to learn how to handle a safety razor. With this razor, you’ll actually feel it once you find the right angle, as the blade will move smoothly, and there’s no need for any tension, Davis explains. “As they say, ‘The safety razor must do all the job for you,’ if the angle is right.” Davis adds, Merkur 38C Heavy-Duty Long Handle Safety Razor While Porteous says the Merkur 34C is a great all-around razor and his go-to recommendation for beginners, he personally prefers the Merkur 38C, which has all the same features but a longer, 3.79-inch handle. (At roughly four ounces, it also weighs more.) Choosing the right safety razor all comes down to personal comfort and what feels best in your hand, he says, adding that people with larger hands might find the 38C easier to grip. Master barber Angelo Ruscetta of American Haircuts in Kennesaw, Georgia, agrees: “A lot of tall guys like longer handles,” he says. But like Porteous, Ruscetta also says choosing the right safety razor ultimately comes down to feel. (He also favors the 38C’s slightly longer handle and heavier weight.) Merkur 23C Classic Long Handle Safety Razor The 23C is another classic Merkur model with plenty of fans. Recommended by Paul Langevin, a co-owner of the Lower East Side barbershop Mildred New York, it’s the longest and lightest razor of the bunch (at 3.87 inches and just over two ounces, respectively). That makes it a good choice for someone who wants to smoothly transition from the feel of a lighter cartridge razor to the world of safety razors. Parker 99R Butterfly Safety Razor Several of our experts recommend “butterfly” safety razors as a great option due to their unique one-piece head that makes swapping in new blades quick and easy. Most safety razors have a straightforward screw-off top for replacing the blade, but a butterfly razor’s head pops open and closes with a simple twist. Parker is one of the best-known safety-razor manufacturers, and this butterfly razor, which comes with five blades, is one of its signature models. “It’s the Cadillac of safety razors,” says Ruscetta, who told us that it’s what he uses at home. At almost four ounces, it’s one of the heavier razors on this list, but Ruscetta favors heavier razors because he likes to let the weight of the razor do some of the work. “That way, you don’t have to force it” and you can get a close shave without applying much pressure, he says. Parker 99R Vintage Butterfly Safety Razor Davis and Gilman recommend this razor. It offers “the same shaving quality as basic safety razors but lets you replace the blades in a more streamlined manner,” Davis says. Gilman goes even further: “Using this razor is not much different in action than any other high-end safety razor.” It has become one of the more popular razors on the market as of late, he adds. The razor has been earning high marks for ease of use — its longer length and grooved handle means there’s “less likelihood for slippage,” he explains. It gets the ideal smooth and close shave for those who prefer a more sculpted, cleaner look. Muhle R41 Open Comb Safety Razor Open-comb razors are generally used by more experienced shavers because the exposed blade makes it easy to cut yourself if you don’t have your technique down. While all of the safety razors we’ve listed thus far are closed comb, if you’re looking for an open-comb style — which some insist provide the closest shave possible — the Muhle R41 is widely regarded as one of the best available. Solomon says that the open-comb design handles longer stubble better than a closed comb, so it might be a good option for people with thicker beards, or for those “who shave less frequently.” As he explains, “an open comb has ‘teeth’ along the head of the razor where the blades protrude, allowing longer stubble to pass through the teeth and reach the blade.” Solomon cautions, however, that this razor is “known to be a very aggressive shave, so it’s best for experts who know what they’re doing.” Its 3.7-inch handle is consistent with the other long-handle razors on the list, and it’s on the lighter end, weighing in at just over two ounces. Merkur Progress 510 Adjustable Safety Razor As our experts have mentioned, the “aggressiveness” of the shave is something common among all safety razors, most of which are rigid in their design, meaning you’re generally stuck with whatever cutting angle is built into the razor and how it closes around a blade. While the rigid design of most safety razors simplifies how you use them, it also makes it impossible to experiment and find what type of shave works best without buying multiple razors. This is where adjustable safety razors come in handy, says Solomon. “Adjustable razors let you control (by twisting the base) how much of the blade protrudes beyond the head, so in essence you can control how aggressive the shave is.” He notes that there aren’t a ton of options out there when it comes to adjustable razors, but the Merkur Progress is thought to be one of the best. The dial at the bottom has five settings to choose from, and the razor itself has some heft, weighing roughly three and a half ounces with a 3.7-inch handle. Bevel Safety Razor Bevel is one of a few companies taking the direct-to-consumer approach with safety razors. It has a whole line of products, including blades, pre-shave oils, shaving creams, and more. According to master barber Julien Howard at New York City’s Blind Barber (who also does pop-ups around the country under the moniker The Velo Barber), Bevel makes one of the best safety razors out there for anyone prone to ingrown hair or with skin that’s especially irritable. “It’s tailored to work with African American facial hair,” he says, noting that it’s designed to minimize ingrowns and irritation. It has one of the longer handles of the bunch, at four inches, and weighs just over three ounces. Feather AS-D2 All-Stainless-Steel Safety Razor For something on the higher end of the price spectrum, Manto suggests this set from Feather, which has a stellar reputation in the barber community and is famous for its made-in-Japan blades, which almost every expert we spoke with says are the sharpest you can buy (more on those below). In terms of design, this razor, with a textured grip and closed comb, is similar to the Merkur 34C and 38C. And with a handle of 3.5-inches long and weight of just over three ounces, it lands somewhere in the middle of the two. But why spend \$160 on this when you can buy other, quality safety razors available for less than a third of the cost? One reason, according to Manto, is that this is made entirely of stainless steel, whereas all the other razors on this list are steel-coated, or made from some sort of alloy. Porteous — who told us he collects and restores vintage safety razors when he’s not working at his barbershop — explains that the Feather razor’s high-quality material recalls the stuff used to make some of the old Gillettes from the ‘30s and ‘40s, which he says are “as solid as can be.” Short of purchasing a vintage safety razor, the Feather is the closest tool you can use to replicate the feel of shaving with one. Bevel Shave Kit “The razor is only part of the puzzle to achieving a comfortable shave, though; you also need the right products,” Raposo explains. According to her, this kit has everything you need, including a pre-shave oil that allows a blade to glide easily across your skin and reduces irritation, a shaving cream to reduce drag (and ultimately, cuts), and aftershave balm to heal the skin for your next shave. “The razor and products are very high quality for the price. There are comparable product lines that cost more than double and don’t include a razor.” Double Edge Razor Blade Sample Pack (7 Varieties, 3 of each) All the experts told us that choosing a blade is very personal, and to a large degree it comes down to comfort and preference. That’s why Porteous says he “always directs people to buy a sample pack and try some out to figure out what’s best for your face.” Sposito agrees, as does Ruscetta, who adds that a sample pack of various brands lets you “feel the differences in thickness between the blades.” It’s worth the trial and error, he says, because “the right blade can be a game changer.” This particular sample pack includes every brand of blade that our experts recommend, plus a couple of other options for good measure. Feather Hi-Stainless Double Edge Razor Blades (100 Count) The made-in-Japan Feather blades are known in the industry as the sharpest available, so it’s no surprise that they were the most recommended of all, with more than half of our experts singing their praises. “Feather is the sharpest on the market, period,” Howard says. “They’re still sharp enough to get through stubble easily.” Davis adds, “And Gilman describes them as “in a league of their own,” assuring us that “you’re not going to get a dud in a pack,” as they’re uniformly sharp and durable. Still, while the pros love a sharp blade after spending years perfecting their technique, it’s important to note that what works best for them might not work best for a nonprofessional shaving at home. As many experts caution, the sharpness of these blades can be irritating to sensitive skin, and sharper blades of course carry an increased risk of nicks and cuts. But if you want a close shave, the experts say you can’t do better than Feather. Derby Extra Double Edge Razor Blades (50 Count) Derby blades were the runner-up, recommended by six of our experts, all of whom say the brand is something of a barbershop staple. As Patrick McLaughlin, a senior barber at Fellow Barber Dumbo told us, “They’re very consistent. I never have any snags. Other brands of blades I’ve used sometimes have bends or folds, but Derby’s are always sharp.” Arthur Iskhakov, the owner of Barber’s Blueprint in New York City, seconds that, saying, “They’re very popular with barbers. Very sharp and reliable.” And Andrew Munoz, the owner of Miami’s the Barber Lounge, says that after switching from Dorco blades to Derby’s “my cuts were instantly smoother.” He adds that these are “a little less sharp,” which made him “instantly feel more comfortable, especially when shaving to sensitive areas like around the lips and under the neck.” Astra Platinum Double Edge Razor Blades (100 Count) The bronze metal goes to Astra blades, which were mentioned by five experts, all of whom described them as thicker than other blades they’ve used. According to Iskhakov, Astra blades are “sharp and durable and really strong because they’re double-coated in steel.” Roscetti says the thicker Astra blades are particularly useful for shaving dense beards or facial hair that’s been growing out for a while. While they cost a little more than the Derby blades, barber Miles Martinez of Tuft NYC says that the difference, in his opinion, is noticeable. “Derbys dull out a little faster, while Astra blades stay sharper for longer.” Miguez agrees with Martinez’s comparison, adding that Astra blades fall somewhere in between the supersharp Feather ones and less-sharp Derby ones. Merkur Super Platinum Stainless Double-Edged Blades (10 Blade Pack) Raposo describes these Merkur blades as moderately sharp, so they’re not necessarily the best for those with coarser beards who need a sharper blade. But she has used these blades on a range of clients and notices that “they give everyone a great shave, while most other blades I’ve tried work for some men but not others.” And although some companies’ blades vary in sharpness from one blade to another, these high-quality blades are consistent across the board, Raposo says. Actually good deals, smart shopping advice, and exclusive discounts. 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