

Shapton Kuromaku Waterstone Frequently Asked Questions

Do Shapton stones need to be soaked in water before use?

No, Shapton stones do not need to be soaked - except the very first time after purchase. We do recommend that on first use, you pre-soak the stone in water for five to six minutes to secure even smoother sharpening.

I found some uneven color on the surface of the stone I just bought. Is anything wrong?

No. It is in the nature of sharpening stones that spots or uneven colors appear on the stone surface. This is not a quality problem, and you can use the stone without concern.

Which face of the KUROMAKU series sharpening stones should I use?

You can use either face, but we recommend that you start on the side where no letters have been printed.

Some white marble-like patterns have appeared on the sharpening stone's surface. Is anything wrong?

No. These white marbled patterns can appear on the surface of a sharpening stone under certain conditions, depending on how the stone is stored. This is not a quality problem, and you can use the stone without concern.

Are there any blade materials that cannot be sharpened?

All blade materials can be sharpened except ceramics and superalloys.

What are sharpening stones made of?

Kuromaku sharpening stones are made of abrasives such as alumina and silicon carbide, combined with binders and other compound materials.

Why do I still see scratches on the blade even though I have sharpened it with a KUROMAKU fine stone?

If you polish it with a finishing stone after sharpening it with a medium stone, but there is still slurry adhering to the blade or your hands, the blade may be scratched by the rough abrasive agent of the medium stone. Because of this, when changing stones and moving to progressively finer sharpening steps, it is important to wash off any dirt produced in the previous step. It is not enough merely to rinse the blade and your hands: you should carefully and thoroughly wash off any dirt on your hands, fingernails, and the surface of the blade.

Do Shapton stones come with a Nagura Stone?

No. Shapton stones do not need a Nagura Stone, and lapping with a Nagura Stone will leave the surface rough and ragged.

Is it OK to use oils with your sharpening stones?

Yes, it's fine to use oil with the stones. However, once you've used oil on a stone, you can only use oil with that stone.

Does a build-up of slurry create any problems when sharpening?

It is fine to sharpen blades without washing away the slurry, but as Shapton sharpening stones have a high abrasive content, they can be used equally well with no slurry present.

Are any of the KUROMAKU sharpening stones recommended for normal household knives?

We recommend the Orange Medium (1000) sharpening stone and Wine Fine (5000) finishing stone. If you intend to use only one stone, we recommend the Blue Medium (1500) sharpening stone.

My sharpening stone no longer sharpens as it did when new - it slips and slides. What should I do?

It may have become clogged. We recommend that you try using a lapping plate.

When I use "KUROMAKU Purple" for sharpening, it feels wrong.

"KUROMAKU Purple" is designed to give an optimum, unprecedented cutting feel to the blade tip (around 1 mm), so it may feel strange if used with conventional sharpening methods.

I want to try using "KUROMAKU Purple", but the 'Precautions' state it should be used after "KUROMAKU Melon" – would it be OK to use it for sharpening after "KUROMAKU Yellow" instead, as this is finer?

That would be fine with high hardness steel, but for blades made from softer materials, please do use "KUROMAKU Melon".

Is it OK to soak your sharpening stones in water for a long time?

No. Don't soak our stones for more than 30 minutes, because this may cause the stone to become softer.

Is it OK to use hot water when sharpening?

No. Don't use hot water with our sharpening stones, because the water will cause extreme changes in temperature that can cause cracks.

Is it OK to use detergent with sharpening stones?

No. Don't use detergents with our sharpening stones, because they can cause changes in the quality of the stones.

Does leaving a sharpening stone outdoors cause any problems?

Leaving a sharpening stone outdoors is not advisable as this may cause it to deteriorate and crack. sharpening stones should be stored indoors at room temperature, away from direct sunlight.

Is it OK to dry a wet sharpening stone using a fan?

No, do not attempt to dry a sharpening stone rapidly by directly applying a fan or the like, as this can cause cracking.

Is it OK to clean sharpening stones in a dishwasher?

No - neither dishwashing machines nor dish dryers should be used.

What should I do if a crack opens up on a sharpening stone?

Cracks can form when a sharpening stone is not used for some time, or if usage precautions are not observed. The main causes are sudden drying or extreme changes in temperature. Shave off the surface at the cracked part. Cracks get deeper as they get wider, so it is important to do this at an early stage, while the crack is still small. If the stone is used in an extremely dry environment, we recommend keeping it in a plastic bag or a sealed plastic container, to prevent acute dry-out after use.

What should I do if a sharpening stone gets clogged?

We recommend using our Lapping Disc, a dressing stone.

How should I take care of my stones after use?

After using a stone, wash any dirt off with a brush or sponge. If dirt is left adhering to a stone, its sharpening ability can decline.

Is it OK to use sandpaper to flatten a sharpening stone's surface?

No, abrasive paper can leave a stone clogged, with the result that the blade slips and it is impossible to sharpen it.

What should I do if the surface is no longer flat?

Sharpening stones start deforming the moment they are used to sharpen a blade. Repeated sharpening then causes the flatness of the blade to be damaged too, mirroring the deformed surface of the stone.

Use a lapping plate such as DGLP or NAORU to return the surface of the sharpening stone to its flat state.

My KUROMAKU fine stone has gone soft.

If you leave a sharpening stone immersed in water for over half an hour, or apply detergents and the like, the stone's surface will soften, or there will be qualitative changes - this is what has happened here.

Also, if you use a wooden sharpening base etc. of your own and this gets wet, the fine stone may absorb moisture from it and become soft.

If this happens, you will need to scrape the sharpening stone until a sharpening surface with the original hardness emerges.

In such cases, use "Medium Lapping Powder" to scrape away the soft parts, then thoroughly rinse away any dirt, and use "Fine Lapping Powder" once again to finish the stone surface.

Storing the KUROMAKU series in their special cases can also help prevent softening, but do wipe away any moisture inside the case first.

Should KUROMAKU sharpening stones be stored together with the white, spongy liner included when they are purchased?

No, the spongy liner (polyethylene foam) should not be used when storing sharpening stones after use. Polyethylene foam is a cushioning material used to prevent breakage during transportation, and if stones that are not completely dry are stored together with this foam, it may cause them to degrade.