

How To Find Your Perfect Folding Knife

By Taylor Hendrickson



Ever since I can remember I have been a knife nut. I would always go into gas stations as a little kid and ask my dad if I could buy whatever pocket knives were there. At the age of 5 he said yes and I was well on my journey to becoming a knife collector. Now, I am in my early thirties and have had hundreds of knives pass through my hands used for various tasks. Well, having been around a few knives, below are a few factors you should consider when buying a folding knife.

Legal Considerations

I personally live in California. California surprisingly has decent knife laws, especially concerning folding knives. I am not a lawyer and I will not pretend to be, but make sure that you check your state and local laws before you purchase a folding knife. Some knives may be assisted opening or even automatic. I know that it is illegal to carry an automatic folding knife concealed here in California and therefore there will not be any recommendations on automatic folding knives on this site. However, a good way to tell for sure if a knife is legal or not is just to go down to your local sporting goods or knife store and see whether or not it is being sold in your state. Also, sites like Amazon usually say whether or not they can ship a specific knife to a certain state.

Folding Knife Sizes

So, let's set some boundaries here on what I would consider to be different knife sizes. There are small, medium, large folding knives.

Small Folding Knives (Blade Length < 2.75 Inches)



SOG Twitch 2 ([Amazon](#))

Small Folding Knives are knives with a blade length of 2.75 inches or smaller. While it may seem as though a small knife is useless, the fact that small knives can be extremely lightweight is a huge factor in choosing what to carry. If you have ever carried a large or XL folding knife every day, you may have noticed how annoying it can sometimes be to have a big heavy object in your pocket. Small knives mitigate that problem. In fact, many small folding knives are so lightweight, you forget that you are carrying them. However, the huge drawbacks to many small folding knives is that they have tiny handles and short blades. The tiny handles can make it difficult to cut through denser materials such as wood or plastic, while the small blade length limits you as to what you can cut. Fortunately, small folding knives make great EDC (Every Day Carry) knives and are excellent for cutting food, opening packages, and other daily tasks.

Medium Folding Knives (Blade Length of 2.75 4 inches)



Spyderco Tenacious ([Amazon](#))

Medium Folding Knives have a blade length of at least 2.75 inches all the way to 4 inches. These blades tend to be the most popular as they can be very versatile. Being a good median between a large folding knife and a small folding knife allows for the best of both categories in some cases. While you may not get a massive blade, you can still have a fully functional knife while also having it be lightweight. Of course, all of this depends on the actual knife, but for the most part medium sized folding knives are going to be lighter than large folding knives. Medium folding knives are the sweet spot of folding knives for those who just want a blade that can do everything. Many believe medium sized folding knives are the best folding knife type that you can buy.

Large Folding Knives (Blade Length > 4 inches)



Cold Steel Ti-Lite XL ([Amazon](#))

Large Folding Knives have a blade length of 4 inches or above. They usually are pretty robust and made of stronger materials with beefy locks. This is because large folding knives are typically designed to complete heavy cutting tasks. Also, many manufacturers design large folding knives as self-defense knives. Now, I personally would NEVER advocate anyone to use a knife for self-defense, but I understand that it is a huge market. If you are looking to buy a knife for self-defense, I recommend you look at other options such as pepper spray or firearms. However, there are many large folding knives that work great for camping uses such as splitting firewood.

Folding Knife Care

Sharpening

The first priority of knife care should be making sure that you have a sharp blade. **A sharp blade is much safer than a dull one.** This may seem counter intuitive, but a sharp blade can easily slice through things, while a dull blade is much more likely to accidentally slip and cut you while attempting to cut something. There are many ways of sharpening a knife, but a common pocket sharpener like [this one](#) should suffice for most people. However, for the knife enthusiast, investing in a leather strop and a high quality sharpening system like the [Spyderco Sharpmaker](#) is well worth the investment.

Cleaning

Since this website is about folding knives, cleaning your knife is essential. You can clean a knife easily with items that you already might have lying around your home. Here are some things that you will need to clean a knife:

- WD-40
- A Soft Cloth or Kitchen Towel
 - Rubber or Latex Gloves
 - A Sponge Or Toothbrush
- Dish Detergent (Mild preferred, but most will work)
 - Household Oil (3-in-1)
 - Nylon Pad

Step One: Clean. First put on some rubber or latex gloves, then wash your knife with a soft cloth/kitchen towel and warm water. Make sure that you wipe down both sides of the blade.

Step Two: Scrub. Scrub your blade with a soapy sponge. If your knife is serrated, then use a toothbrush instead of a sponge in order not to tear up the sponge with the serrations. If there is stuff

stuck on the blade, use some dish detergent to clean it off. After you have thoroughly scrubbed the blade, rinse it with with warm water and clean it off with a kitchen towel.

Step Three: Remove Rust. Take a lubricant, such as WD-40, and spray both sides of the blade with it. Then, leave the blade to sit and soak in the lubricant for a few minutes. After letting the blade soak in the lubricant, take a nylon pad and scrub both sides of the blade. If there is any rust left, repeat step three until you have a moderately clean blade.

Step Four: Wash and Oil. Once you have a blade that you are satisfied with, wash the blade once again with warm water and soap. Then, dry both sides of the blade. Finally, add a few drops of household oil (3-in-1) to both sides of the blade. Congratulations, you now should have the best folding knife that you could make.

Folding Knife Blade Types

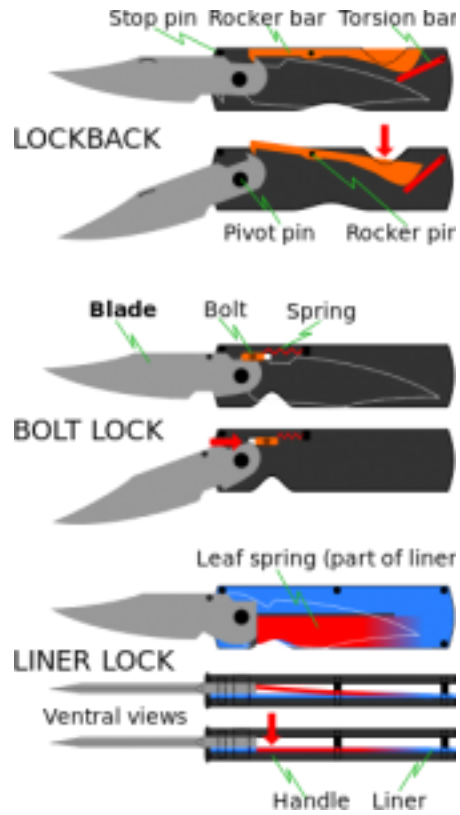
There are two main things to consider when deciding to buy a specific type of folding knife. The first of those things is blade shape. Knife blades come with various blade and tip designs, but most follow a pattern to the image below. The second thing to consider is lock type. There are various different lock designs, but some are stronger than others, while the others maybe more ergonomic but less rugged.

Blade Types

KNIFE BLADE SHAPES



Common Lock Types



Knife Accessories

Since collecting knives has been a hobby that has been around for hundreds of years, many accessories have been developed for these amazing tools. Below is a list of different types of accessories that you use to compliment the best folding knife that you can find.

Sheaths

While most sheaths are made for fixed blade knives, some individuals prefer to carry their folding knives in a sheath. Sheaths aren't only useful for easy carry and deployment of a knife, they also allow for protection of the blade. Sheaths are made of different materials and some materials have better properties than others. Below is a list of different sheath materials and their advantages and disadvantages.

- [Leather Sheath](#) – Leather is a very traditional material to make knife sheaths out of. Leather has been proven to stand the test of time. It is tough, strong, and rugged.



Unlike plastic, most leather sheaths can be easily fixed up with a few stitches. One neat thing about a leather sheath is that as it becomes more aged, it tends to look even better than it does new. Leather is quite versatile and can be custom fit to almost any knife once it is broken in.

- **[Kydex Sheath](#)** – Kydex is an acrylic-polyvinyl chloride thermoplastic material that is widely used for knife sheaths. Kydex is a relatively modern material. It won't shrink over time, it is waterproof, and it is also resistant to scratches. Kydex is also very resistant to many chemicals including the acid that your skin produces.



Kydex is very durable and holds up extremely well in various environments. The big drawback to Kydex is that it is loud. Since Kydex is a thermoplastic, it tends to make a large snapping noise when you draw the blade out of the sheath.

- **[Plastic Sheath](#)** – Plastic sheaths that aren't Kydex tend to be very cheaply made, however they are some of the most readily available sheaths on the market.



They tend to be lower cost, but at that low cost comes many disadvantages. Like Kydex, plastic sheaths usually make a large snapping noise when you draw the blade out of the sheath. However, plastic is resistant to water and most acids.

- [Nylon Sheath](#) – Nylon is very commonly used for knife sheaths. The advantages of nylon is that it is light, tough, and strong.



The big drawback to nylon sheaths is that they usually fray and get stretched out over time eventually needing to be replaced. However, nylon is not very vulnerable to water and is resistant to mildew and rotting.

Sharpeners

There are many different and unique sharpening systems that have been developed, but most fall into certain categories. A list of different categories of knife sharpeners is shown below.



Electric Sharpeners – This type of sharpener usually has a 2-4 step process for creating, sharpening, honing, and maintaining a sharp edge on your knife blade. The first step of this type of sharpener usually involves a very coarse grit used to create a certain angle on your blade before it further hones the blade into a sharper, neater edge you step through the different portions of the sharpener. Electric sharpeners are popular because they are easy to use and can give your knife a decent edge. However, they limit your blade to a certain angle which is their ultimate downside.



Handheld Sharpeners – These are just like electric sharpeners, except instead of having the blade automatically ground, you physically have to pull the knife through the sharpener. These are usually the cheapest types of sharpeners to purchase, but once again, they limit the angle that you can put on your blade.



[Honing/Sharpening Steels](#) – While it is called a sharpening steel, it actually doesn't do much sharpening. In fact, sharpening steels actually work by bending and scraping off pieces of steel on your knife that are bent out of place or small fragments of your knife that are chipped and about to fall off. A sharpening steel should be used as a complement to another sharpening system.



[Sharpening Stone](#) – This is the classic way to sharpen a knife. Usually, a sharpening stone has a coarse side and a smooth side. The coarse side is used to form an angle on your blade, while the smooth side is used to hone the knife to a sharp edge. Sharpening stones allow for versatility of blade angles, however, they are not exactly beginner friendly. For a beginner, an electric or handheld sharpener is recommended.

Picking The Best Folding Knife

Ultimately, picking the folding knife that is best for you is purely personal taste. The main first step in finding YOUR perfect knife is to decide what blade size you want. Personally, I prefer small, lightweight knives. However, I have a friend that swears by his massive Cold Steel Espada. In the end, don't let marketers sway you into purchasing a knife that you aren't going to love.