

# 10 BEST KNIFE BLOCK SETS

## Sharpen up your knife skills

If you're serious about cooking, it's worth investing in a decent block of blades

For where to buy items shown, turn to page 208

It doesn't matter what you're chopping, if you use a cheap, blunt knife, the job will take longer and accidents are more likely to happen as you have to push down harder. So, invest in some professional blades, such as these knife-block sets – they're a great way to start your collection.

**FIND A BALANCE** Get to grips with the knives out of their packaging. Hold the knife in your hand with your palm up and two fingers at the bolster (the bit between the blade and the handle). It should feel nicely balanced – if it doesn't, whatever the brand, it's not right for you.

### GET A BLADE FOR EVERYTHING

An all-purpose **chef's knife** with a curved blade can be used for chopping, as can a **santoku knife**, though this is more suited to delicate, Asian-style cooking. For roasts, a **carving knife** with a long, curved blade

is essential. You'll also need a **paring knife** or the slightly longer **utility knife** – both are ideal for peeling, trimming and slicing fruit and vegetables. Complete your set with a **bread knife** and a **serrated knife** for slicing foods with a crust or tough skin.

**SHARPEN YOUR KNIVES** Beginners should start with a pull-through sharpener (look for knife blocks with integral ones). Run your knives through it several times once a month. If you're more confident, buy a steel, but be aware that there are two types. A honing steel (about £15) is best for regular maintenance, but if your knife is blunt, you'll need a sharpening steel (about £30). Your local cookware store can give you a demonstration of how to use them. Always hand wash your knives, even if the packaging says they're dishwasher safe, and dry them immediately to prevent corrosion.



### For Oriental cooking

**25th Anniversary Block, Global**  
SAVVY SHOPPER SAYS Great for sushi fans, this set contains Oriental-style knives. **Knives** 8cm paring; 15cm flexible utility; 11cm utility; 11cm Chinese cleaver; 15cm Oriental chef's; 12cm santoku **Others available?** **Features** Forged (not fully) blade; 56-58 Rockwell; stainless-steel block



### Design classic

**Classic 9835, Wusthof**  
SAVVY SHOPPER SAYS This often-copied, intricately engineered, three-rivet design is as popular now as it's ever been. **Knives** 8cm paring; 12cm utility; 20cm bread; 20cm carving; 20cm chef's; sharpening steel; scissors **More knives available?** **Yes** **Features** Full tang; fully forged; 57 Rockwell; beech block



### Bargain blades

**Different By Design, Sainsbury's**  
SAVVY SHOPPER SAYS Fully forged, full tang, Japanese-steel... and all for under £40. However, you can't try before you buy. **Knives** 9cm paring; 13cm serrated; 20cm bread; 20cm carving; 20cm chef's **Others available?** **No** **Features** Full tang; fully forged; 52-54 Rockwell; wood block



### Pukka for beginners

**Jamie Oliver, DKB**  
SAVVY SHOPPER SAYS The name of each knife is etched on to the end of its handle, so even a novice can see which is which. **Knives** 11cm paring; 15cm utility; 22cm bread; 20cm carving; 19cm chef's **Others available?** **No** **Features** Full tang; forged (not fully) blade; 55 Rockwell; beech block; 25-year guarantee



### Cutting-edge Conran

**Sebastian Conran, John Lewis**  
SAVVY SHOPPER SAYS This sculptural block of knives looks stunning in either the ceramic (shown) or beechwood block. **Knives** 10cm paring; 15.5cm utility; 21.5cm bread; 21.5cm carving; 21.5cm chef's **More knives available?** **No** **Features** Forged (not fully) blade; 54 Rockwell; ceramic or wood block



### Great starter set

**KK-910WB, Rockingham Forge**  
SAVVY SHOPPER SAYS A good price for a smart set that includes a sharpening steel. **Knives** 9cm paring; 13cm utility; 18cm santoku; 20cm bread; 20cm carving; 20cm chef's; sharpening steel; scissors **Others available?** **Yes** **Features** Full tang; fully forged; 53 Rockwell; wood or steel block



### High-spec block

**Signature, Robert Welch**  
SAVVY SHOPPER SAYS This hi-tech block features a built-in sharpener and magnetic locators that hold the blades. **Knives** 8cm paring; 14cm utility; 12cm serrated; 22cm bread; 23cm carving; 14cm chef's **Others available?** **Yes** **Features** Full tang; fully forged; 55-56 Rockwell; built-in sharpener



### Impressive handling

**Classic, ScanPan**  
SAVVY SHOPPER SAYS These sleek handles offer a great grip, so even if your hands are wet, there's no danger of them slipping. **Knives** 9cm paring; 15cm utility; 20cm bread; 20cm carving; 20cm chef's **Others available?** **Yes** **Features** Full tang; fully forged; 57 Rockwell; beech block



### Heirloom knives

**Henckels knife set, Divertimenti**  
SAVVY SHOPPER SAYS Take care not to let them go blunt, and you'll be rewarded with blades that will last for generations. **Knives** 10cm paring; 13cm utility; 20cm bread; 20cm carving; 20cm chef's; sharpening steel; scissors **Others available?** **Yes** **Features** Full tang; fully forged; 58 Rockwell; wood block



### Carnivore's set

**DS61N, Stellar**  
SAVVY SHOPPER SAYS Keen roasters will like the boning and huge 23cm carving knives. **Knives** 9cm paring; 11cm peeler; 11cm steak; 16cm boning; 23cm carving; 20cm bread; 20cm chef's; sharpening steel **Others available?** **Yes** **Features** Full tang; fully forged; 55-57 Rockwell; stainless-steel block

## SHOPPER'S CHECKLIST

- FULL TANG** The knife handle attaches to the tang, which is an extension of the blade. A full tang runs the length and width of the handle, adding weight, strength and balance to the knife. Many knives are only half tang.
- FULLY FORGED** This is when the blade, bolster (the shoulder between the handle and blade) and tang are made from a single piece of steel, which is then heated in a forge. This makes for a particularly strong knife. Knives with only a forged blade will have a handle or bolster welded on separately, so it can be made from the material most suited to the task. The cheapest knives are not forged but stamped – the blade is pressed out of a sheet of metal – which makes for a weaker knife.
- ROCKWELL FACTOR** This only applies to forged knives. A factor of 52 indicates a softer knife that can become blunt quickly, but you'll find it easy to sharpen. Knives of over factor 58 retain their sharpness longer, but if they do lose it, you'll need to sharpen them with a whetstone.
- BLADE LENGTH** This measurement refers to the blade, not the bolster or handle.

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### EXPERT ADVICE



Always use a wooden or plastic chopping board. Your knives will go blunt quick as a flash if you slice down on glass and ceramic surfaces'

Amy Cutmore, Consumer Editor

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