

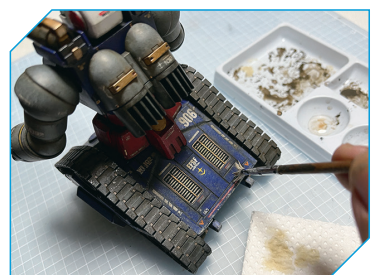
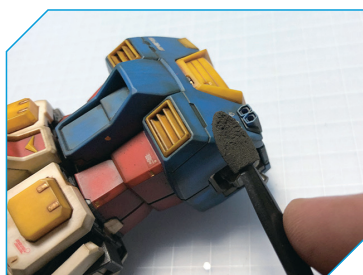
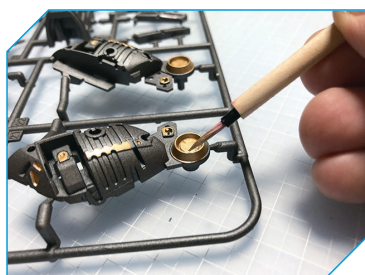
GUNPLA EASY CUSTOM GUIDE 2

A Casual Guide to Leveling Up Your Skills



HOBBY JAPAN MOOK

Rider Joe



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* This book builds on and expands the “Easy Gundam Techniques 2022” that featured in *Hobby Japan* magazine April 2022 issue.



Rider Joe

Born in 1969 in Higashiosaka, the city of manufacturing.

By day, he works with state-of-the-art 3D tools, including 3D printers, 3D scanners, CAD/CAM, and machine tools. But in stark contrast to his technologically advanced work, he is passionate about traditional craftsmanship when it comes to plastic modeling. His motto is to create cool-looking models with minimal cost and effort using everyday tools. When the switch flips, he goes full-on scratch building with plastic sheets, epoxy putty, and dollar store tools. Now that his sons are grown, he lives a lively life with his wife and two cats, Rin the black cat and Yuki the white cat, and finds solace in their company.

EASY MODELING LEVEL 1 FUNDAMENTALS



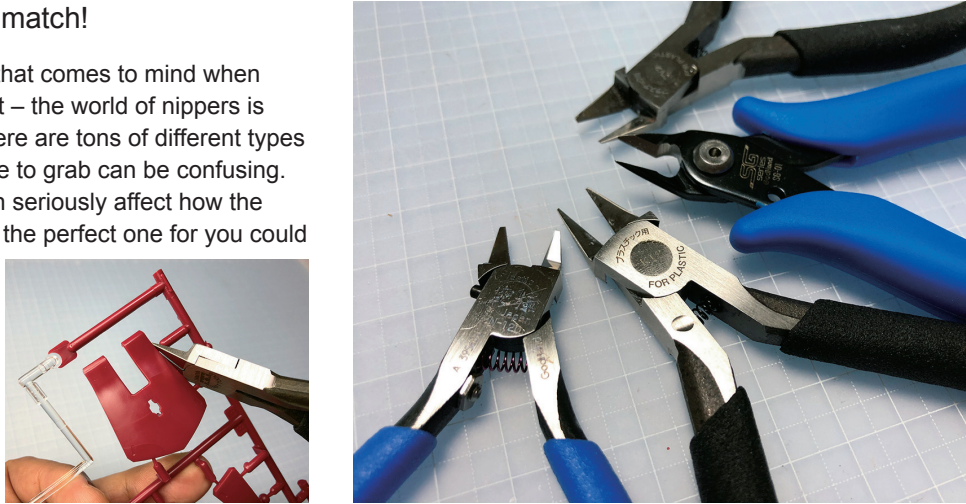
Before we dive into Gunpla, let's start with the basics of modeling tools, presented from Rider Joe's unique “Easy Modeling” perspective!

Nippers and part cutting

Nippers: Find your perfect match!

Nippers are just about the first tool that comes to mind when you think of model building. But wait – the world of nippers is much bigger than just “nippers.” There are tons of different types out there, and figuring out which one to grab can be confusing. Believe it or not, the right nipper can seriously affect how the rest of your modeling goes. Finding the perfect one for you could be the key to breaking out of your beginner status!

In this section, we'll focus on what most people call “model nippers.” We'll break down the basics of nippers, and some tips for cutting parts cleanly.



Team Double-edge or Single-edge?

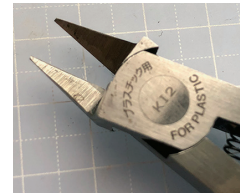
The world of nippers is not as simple as it seems! There are two main types: double-edged and single-edged. Double-edged nippers used to be king, but lately single-edged nippers have been stealing the spotlight thanks to their sharper cuts and cleaner finishes. Single-beveled nippers have one sharp

cutting blade and a flat anvil blade on the other side. Knowing the pros and cons of each will help you choose the perfect pair for your modeling adventures.

Double-edge example: Tamiya Fine Point Thin Blade Nipper (for gate cutting)



◀ This nipper is the king of double-edged nippers when it comes to bang for your buck! It handles most gate cuts with ease. I recently bought another one and now have a total of six in my arsenal.



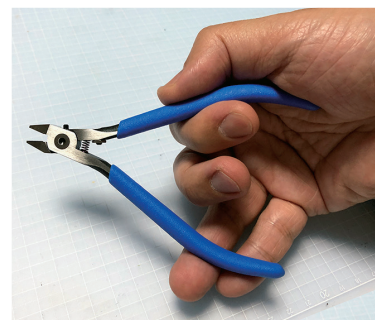
Single-edge example: GodHand Ultimate Nipper 5.0



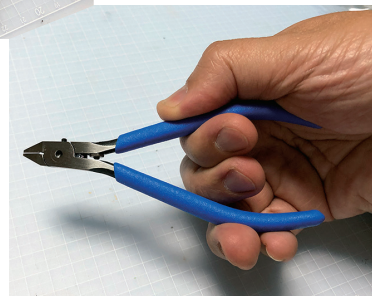
◀ This nipper cuts like butter! It has the smoothest feel ever. And the cutting surfaces? Impeccable. Top quality, no question.



Rider Joe's Nipper Gripping Technique

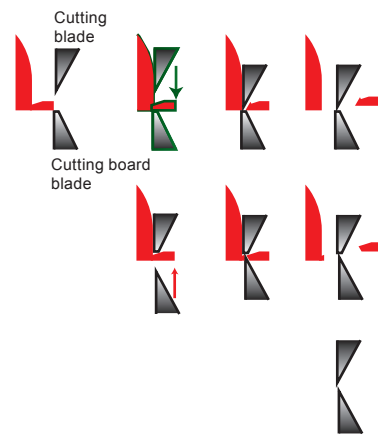


► The key is to keep the top handle still, like an anvil. Concentrate on moving only the bottom handle with the blade. This grip also works with double-bladed nippers. It may take some getting used to, so don't worry if it doesn't feel perfect right away. (You might want to practice doing 50 cuts a day... just kidding!)



◀ Grip is key! Nippers work like scissors, using leverage to cut things. That's why you want a firm grip on the top handle, which acts like an anvil. Normally, you'd use all your fingers for the bottom handle, the one with the actual blade. But since I've got short fingers, I hold it this way for better control.

▼ Look at the picture below to see how the nippers should grip the part nice and tight. When cutting, don't use brute force – be gentle! Remember, we only want to cut the small nub (the gate) that connects the part to the main runner. If you accidentally cut the runner itself, it will quickly dull the nipper blades, and nobody wants dull nippers! And, of course, these nippers are for plastic model parts, not for cutting plastic sheets or metal! So never try to cut them!



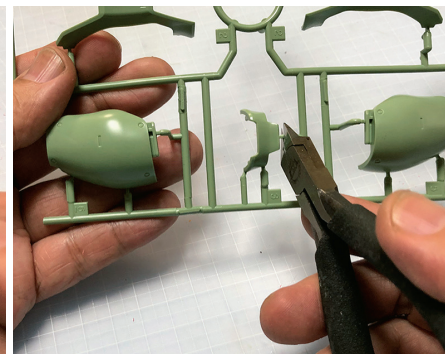
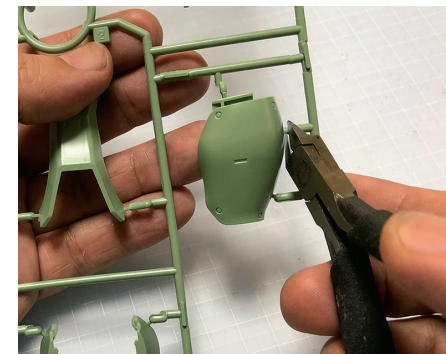
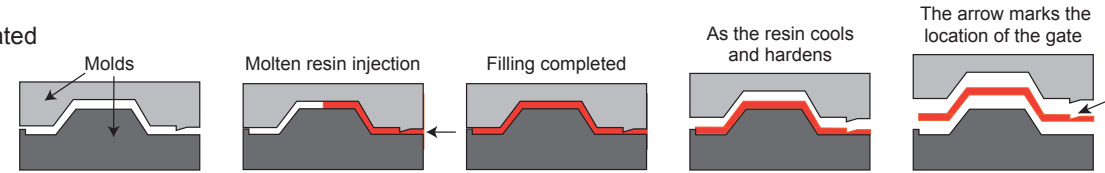
Single-bladed
Always place the cutting blade along the part you want to cut, not vice versa!
Press the back of the blade firmly against the side of the part, secure the anvil blade to the gate, and move only the blade.
However, if you reverse the part's direction, it's the anvil blade that you'll place along the part. Avoid doing this whenever possible, as it can cause gouging in the part or leave a remaining gate.
Even double-edged nippers, while appearing symmetrical, actually have a slight misalignment. This misalignment may become more noticeable with use.

Rider Joe's guide to using nippers

Nippers are much better than they used to be. However, I still like to make two or three cuts to avoid gouging into the actual model parts. That's why I'm going to share my daily nipping routine with you.

Since I usually build my models right in my living room, these tips are all about keeping the peace at home!

How gates are created



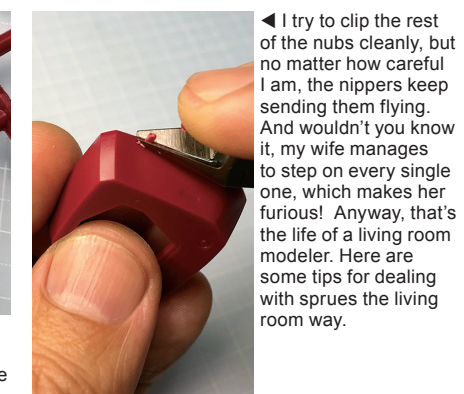
◀ Want to cut your parts faster? Here's a trick: instead of constantly changing the angle of your nippers, group all the gates facing the same direction and cut them all at once! Just rotate the runner itself as you go. You'll be a gate cutting machine in no time.



▲ Here's a cool safety tip: Use your older, duller nippers for the first cut. That way, even if you accidentally go a little deep on a thick gate or runner, you won't ruin your model.



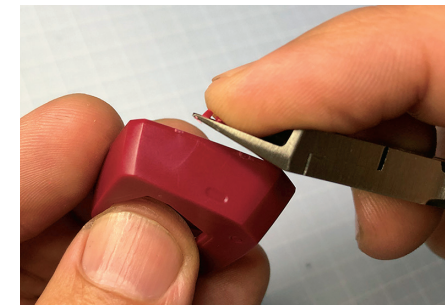
▲ This way, you can intentionally leave gates on the parts by reversing the direction of the nippers. Some nippers are even specially designed to leave nub marks.



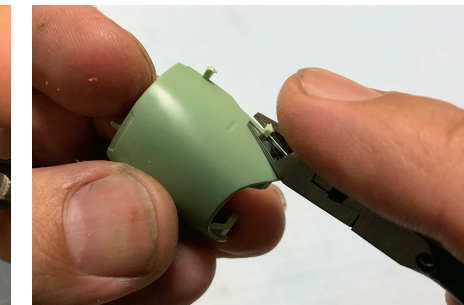
◀ I try to clip the rest of the nubs cleanly, but no matter how careful I am, the nippers keep sending them flying. And wouldn't you know it, my wife manages to step on every single one, which makes her furious! Anyway, that's the life of a living room modeler. Here are some tips for dealing with sprues the living room way.



▲ I gently cover the sprue pieces with my index finger to prevent them from flying off.



▲ I just grip the bottom handle lightly with my ring and pinky finger. This lets the sprue bits drop safely between the blade and my index finger, no shrapnel flying here!



▲ The same grip and cutting method works for single-edge nippers too. That's why my way of holding the nippers might look a bit unusual!

Keeping your favorite nippers in top shape

Let's face it, nippers are workhorses. They're constantly battling plastic with their steel blades, and all that cutting takes a toll. You need to take care of them or they will lose their sharpness. Fortunately, there are ways to keep your cutter blades happy and healthy. Here are a few options:

- Nipper caps: Think of them as little helmets that protect the blade when your nippers are off duty.
- Maintenance kits: These kits are like a spa day for your nippers, taking care of loose joints, rust and keeping things nice and smooth.

Now that those blades are wearing down, sharpening may seem like the answer. But unless you're a pro, trying to do it yourself can backfire. Don't despair! You can give your old nippers a new lease on life by using them for specific tasks, such as “second cuts” or just tackling those pesky runners. Just like shoe size, hand size is important when it comes to nippers. Everyone is built differently, and my fingers are, shall we say, vertically challenged. Popular nippers may feel great in other people's hands, but not mine. In fact, my short fingers make controlling single-edged nippers a bit of a struggle. Plus, I'm guilty of trying new nippers only to let them gather dust. Maybe that means I haven't found “the one” yet.

Easy Modeling Level 1 Fundamentals 2

Cutting and slicing: various ways to use a knife

Design knife: Your convenient secret weapon!

We all think of knives for one thing, right? Cutting. At least that's what I thought until a few years ago. Even when making Gunpla, I barely touched a knife. Then disaster struck – my nippers chipped a blade, and I had to grab a craft knife to clean the nubs. That's when everything changed. This article takes a deep dive into the world of “cutting and slicing” – with a focus on knives, of course! We'll explore all the ways you can use knives and their trusty companions to tackle any project.



The knife gang: your cutting crew

We all have that trusty craft knife lying around, right? It's a household workhorse. But here's the thing: there's a whole world of knives out there, each with its own special skill set. From paper tigers to plastic

slayers and even glass conquerors, there's a perfect blade for every job. Today, I'm gonna show you some of the knives I reach for most often in my toolbox.



Craft Knife

▲ This trusty knife has been my go-to for years. I picked it up at a dollar store ages ago, but it tackles everything I throw at it – cutting out templates, cleaning up those pesky parting lines, and even trimming down nubs.



NT Cutter Design Knife (top) Olfa Art Knife (bottom)

▲ These two are my dynamic duo – all I need to get the job done. This design knife is my go-to for precision work, especially cutting out decals. Its slim profile and sharp blade make it perfect for intricate work. As for the Art Knife, its angled blade and comfortable grip make it my champion for cleaning up parting lines.



Tamiya P Cutter

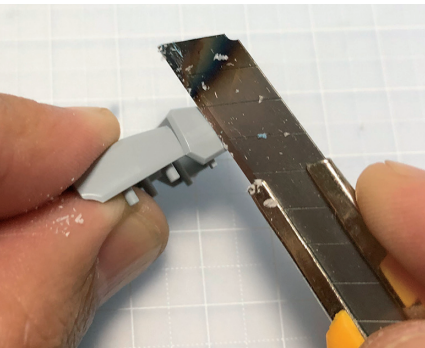
▲ As the name suggests, this cutter is for cutting plastic. It works a little differently than a normal knife. Instead of just slicing straight through, it first cuts a line that you can then snap clean. Think of it as a mini chisel with a blade shape to match!



Tamiya Precision Saw

▲ This little guy comes in handy when I need to tackle thicker pieces or those tiny details. Unlike a hot knife, it leaves a super clean edge, which saves me a ton of time cleaning up afterward.

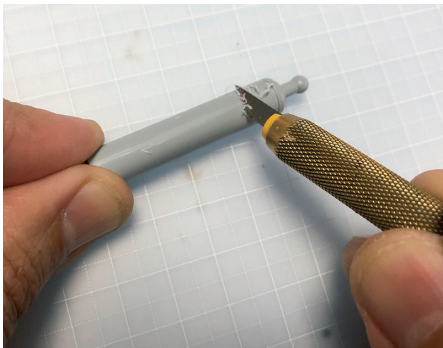
Knife Tricks: Cutting and shaving, effective methods



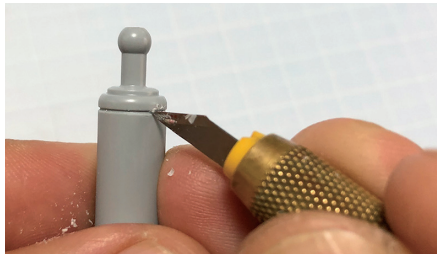
▲ When it comes to tackling those pesky nub marks, a craft knife is the classic go-to tool, especially for flat surfaces. It's like a tiny planer, shaving away excess plastic with precision and ease.



▲ Rather than using only the tip, use the “belly” of the art knife – the curved area just behind the tip – to plane and smooth the parting line. Apply gentle, even pressure as you glide the knife in a forward motion along the line.



▲ After making a double cut on the gates, you can use an art knife to remove the nubs. This is especially helpful if you find nippers a bit tricky to control. Just be careful and watch where the blade is going to avoid accidents.



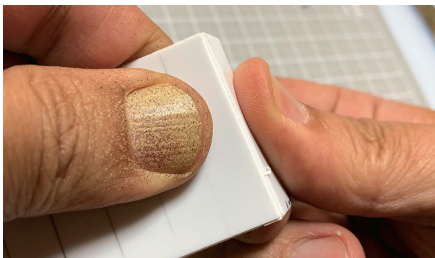
▲ Recarving recessed shapes is also easy with a design knife or art knife. With just one more step, you can even create new panel lines!



▲ The true purpose of a knife is to cut. When it comes to trimming excess decal material, design knives are the clear winners. Their angled blades provide a clear view of the cutting line, making them the perfect tool for precise detail work.



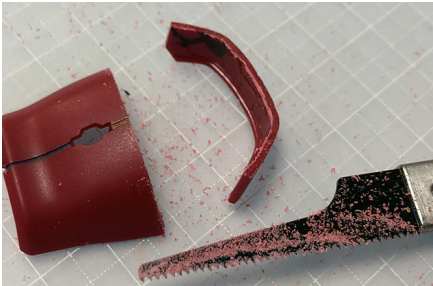
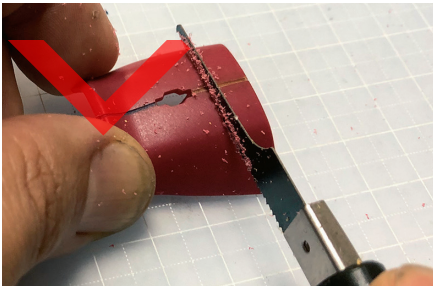
▲ The P Cutter's hooked blade works like a tiny claw, scratching along the cutting line. Unlike a regular knife, you won't cut through the material in one swift motion. Instead, use gentle, repeated strokes, as if you're tracing the line multiple times.



▲ And there you have it – the plastic sheet neatly cut in two!

Making the most of everyday and advanced tools

The humble knife is an indispensable tool for any modeler, and a design knife in particular can truly enhance your Gunpla creations. By using both “slicing” and “scraping” techniques, you can greatly improve both the quality and efficiency of your work. Give it a try! To conclude this section, I'd like to introduce a new addition to my knife collection that I've been using quite a bit lately. Until recently, I had been using a dollar store shear to cut plastic sheets, but the cuts were always rough and the plastic would warp. With this new tool, those days are over! For someone who frequently works with plastic sheeting, this could be a lifesaver.



▲ Precision saw at work: equipped with a blade tailored for cutting plastic, this saw can make quick work of pieces like these – in a matter of seconds! And look at that smooth, clean cut!



▲ Both the GodHand Amazing Cutter (left) and the GodHand Plastic Sheet Scissors (right) are excellent choices for clean and effortless cutting of plastic sheets.



▲ With minimal pressure, the Plastic Sheet Scissors cut effortlessly through plastic sheeting. The cutting line tends to curve in the direction of the applied force, which takes some practice to master. Once you've mastered the technique, however, those cheap dollar store shears will be a relic of the past!



▲ Amazing Cutter in action: Unlike scissors, the Amazing Cutter resembles a paper cutter, effortlessly slicing through plastic sheets with a clean, precise cut. The resulting edge is remarkably smooth, minimizing the need for extensive finishing.

The tricky art of straight cuts

Don't let the humble knife fool you! Getting clean, straight, parallel cuts can be surprisingly tricky. Even with a ruler to guide you, your blade can wander. It's a common obstacle for beginners, but mastering knife control opens up a whole new level of crafting. As we've explored, a good first step is to pick up a decent knife. And hey, using a knife plane to remove those parting lines – easy and fun. Please give it a shot!



▲ What makes the Amazing Cutter a knife? The “blade” is a replaceable razor blade, the same type used in utility knives. When the blade dulls, you can simply replace it, restoring the sharpness and allowing you to continue slicing through plastic sheets with effortless precision.



▲ Compare cut edges. Observe the cut edges of plastic sheets cut with different tools. Thinner cuts typically show more curvature. But the Amazing Cutter stands out! It produces remarkably clean, straight cuts, even on thin sections. In fact, this tool is so enjoyable to use, you may find yourself cutting more than you need to...