It was in the very early 1980s when rotary cutters made their debut in the sewing and quilting market. The rotary cutters came first; the mats out of necessity—oh boy, shortly thereafter. Interestingly enough, cutters and mats didn’t launch at the same time, resulting in several ruined cutting surfaces. Ask me how I know this! Regardless, rotary cutters are used by quilters, sewists, and crafters alike. The blade size has expanded and also the accessories.

Gathering all the sizes and shapes of cutters from my sewing lab, I thought I’d share a few rotary cutting tips with you.

A variety of sizes for different tasks
There are four sizes of rotary cutters: **60 mm, 45 mm, 28 mm, and 18 mm**. I use each of my rotary cutters for different applications:

The **18 mm** (5-3/4” long) is great for cutting tight curves on a single layer of fabric and small quilting projects such as paper piecing.

The **28 mm** (6” long) is great for cutting fine lines and curves.

The **45 mm** (7-1/2” long) is the most popular size for everyday cutting and my “go-to” cutter.

The **60 mm** (8-1/2” long) is ideal for cutting many layers at a time, or for cutting through denims and upholstery fabric.

I especially like the rubber padding on the three larger sizes that provide extra comfort and control. Not to worry if you’re left-handed, all of the pictured cutters easily convert for right- or left-handed use.
You’ll notice that I have a fifth cutter; this one has a decorative blade. The decorative blades, sold separately, fit the 45 mm cutters.

Keep sharp!
There are a variety of ways to keep rotary blades sharp. The short video below gives details. Always remember when removing the blade for sharpening or for replacing, use a Rotary Cutter Blade Magnet to keep your fingers from touching the sharp edges.
Rock-a-bye rotary cutters
My sewing studio is rather messy. Okay, sometimes it can be a downright disaster. Often my rotary cutters end up underneath a pile of fabric, nowhere to be found. After several search and rescue missions, the idea came to me to design a cradle for my cutters. With the help of my artist—I sketched, she designed—we made a rotary cutter from poster board and tape. Then, sent it to Clover Needlecraft.

Months later after tweaking and refining, the Rotary Cutter Cradle was manufactured, fitting sizes 28, 45, and 60 mm rotary cutters.
The most popular brands of rotary cutters rest perfectly in the cradle. One of the tweaking adjustments made by the engineers at Clover was to make the cutters rest in the Rotary Cutter Cradle so that we can easily grasp the cutter and go directly to cutting. No repositioning is needed.
Speaking of cutting . . .

I like the clearance given to the blades in this design. I can cut from my usual standing position when holding the blade at a 45-degree angle.

I can just as easily cut from a seated position. Notice that change in the angle, yet the blade is free to make a clean cut.
A novel way to use the 18 mm cutter

My staff and I sew and create lots of bags and totes. Adding magnetic snaps and bag feet is a weekly task. Here are the steps:

Using the disk from the snap or foot package, mark the position of the prongs on the interfacing side of the bag.

Hold the 18 mm cutter perpendicular to the cutting mat and depress the blade into the fabric at each mark.
Cut a rectangle from a scrap of Shape 'n Create (plastic support for the bottom of bags and totes) and make the same two cuts. The plastic support gives the snap additional support. Attach the snaps or bag feet. Ta da!

I hope you've enjoyed these rotary cutting tips!
Bye for now,
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