

Hayden Ballard
Obsidian or Steel: Which Makes the Cut?

I did this experiment to settle a question that a picture couldn't do. I had been told that obsidian was sharper than steel by thousandths of micrometers, but I never put it to the test until now.

When first starting I was basing my hypotheses on my Uncle Dale. He has been a hunter for many years, and has skinned many animals with obsidian and steel blades, but he preferred obsidian. He said that he'd take obsidian over steel any day. I was expecting obsidian to beat steel right away.

Well that's definitely not what happened. I first had to build a device that I would be able to use for both blades. Then I began running tests. From this experiment I created a device that can hold any practical blade. Also I found out that steel is more durable than obsidian. I am still confident that obsidian is stronger than steel; although obsidian is very brittle and only good for short uses. For patients getting a heart bypass or cosmetic surgery, an obsidian blade is preferred by surgeons for its ability to cut so efficiently and leave less scar tissue than steel. This is another reason why I would choose obsidian blades for cutting soft tissue.