



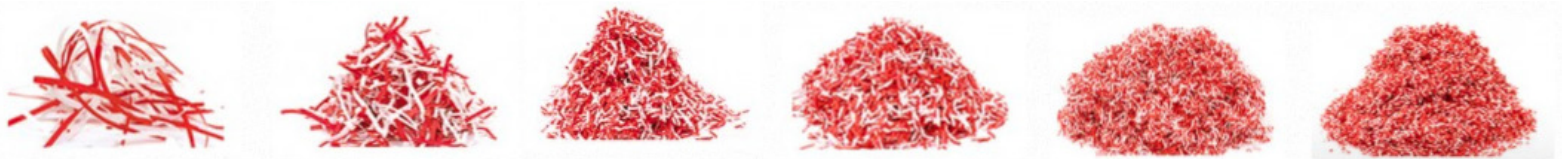
How to Pick a Shredder

When trying to decide which shredder to buy, most people often look at factors such as Sheet Capacity, or whether or not it can shred paper clips and CDs. However, those are not the only factors, or even the most important. Some more important factors to consider are:

- ◆ Shred Security Level (particle size) ◆ Quality of Cutting Shaft ◆ Strength/Quality of Motor
- ◆ Recommended Shredding Volume (amount of paper that can be shredded before the motor overheats and shuts off)

Shred Particle Size (DIN Levels)

The newly updated EU standard security levels, or DIN levels, (DIN being the German acronym for the German Institute for Standardization), are used throughout the world, and refer to the maximum size of the shred particle. The older standard started with Level 1 (wide strips), and went up to Level 5 (micro cut). The new standards are pictured below, with the maximum size of the particle and the recommended use.



P-2

P-3

P-4

P-5

P-6

P-7

| Internal Security | Sensitive & Confidential | Very Sensitive & Confidential | Secret | Secret With High Security | Top Secret with Strict Security |
|---|--|--|---|--|---|
| Strip Cut max 5.8mm wide | Cross Cut max particle size 4 x 50mm | Cross Cut max particle size 4 x 38mm | Micro Cut max particle size 2 x 15mm | Super Micro Cut max particle size 0.8 x 12 mm | High Security max particle size 0.8 x 5 mm |
| Offers fairly little security, as strips can be reassembled. Great for paper mache. | Minimum level recommended for shredding anything with identifying info on it (name, address, etc.) | Recommended for anything with financial info on it. Minimum recommended for legal/medical offices. | Required shred security level for organizations such as RCMP and other government agencies. | Recommended for more secure government agencies, global financial institutions, etc. | This is basically paper dust. Used by military & intelligence agencies, and James Bond types. |

Cutting Shaft Quality

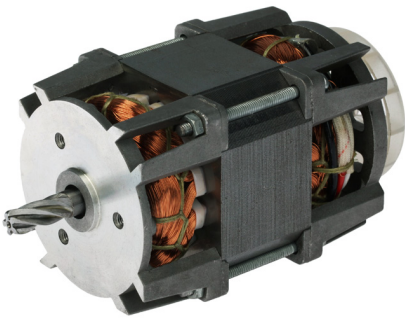
Not all blades are created equal. When it comes to the blades that cut the paper, the quality of the steel is critical. Low quality (and low cost) shredders use softer, poorer quality steel that dulls more easily, leading to frequent jams and motor overheating. Companies that make good quality shredders will usually stand behind their product and offer lifetime warranties on their cutting shafts. This is separate from the overall device warranty (typically 1-3 years) that covers the motor, electronics, sensors, waste bin, etc. The exception to the lifetime warranty rule of thumb is on the Micro Cut (MC) and Super Micro Cut (SMC) cutting shafts

(DIN Level 5 and above). These warranties are typically 1 year, due to the increased number of blades and the high friction associated with cutting particles so small. These cutting shafts will also have lower sheet capacities than shredders of the same size with DIN levels 4 and below. This does not mean the steel is poor quality. On the contrary, only high quality hardened steel can be used in MC and SMC cutting shafts.



Just remember, when it comes to quality, that old rule of thumb applies:

“You get what you pay for”



Motor Strength & Recommended Volume

The strength and quality of the shredder motor determines how long the shredder can run before overheating and shutting down to cool. This is typically shown on the shredder spec sheets as Run Time/Cool Down Time (in minutes). The better the motor, the longer it can run before needing to stop to cool down. This is common on personal use or desktside shredders. Central office shredders (designed for use by multiple people), have bigger motors designed to run longer as well as allow for more sheets to

be shredded at once. Higher quality central office shredders will run continuously, while lower quality central office shredders will need to stop after a certain period of time just like desktside shredders.

Pricing

Of course, one of the most important factors to consider when purchasing anything is price. Shredder prices are determined by many factors, but the 3 most important factors are DIN security level, waste bin/sheet capacity, and motor/blade quality. This is why you can find strip cut shredders at office supply stores that just sit on top of your waste bin for \$25-\$35, and High Security P-7 central office shredders for \$10,000-\$15,000, *and everything in between!*



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