

Confiscated Prison Weapons

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I think everyone knows that weapons are not allowed in prisons, so how do these guys keep stabbing and beating people with sharp and blunt objects? Well if you were locked in a cage for the rest of your life and you keep getting beat up every day, I think you are going to pull some heavy duty MacGyver type shit and make yourself a pretty little shank out of toilet paper rolls, which actually happens. Here are a bunch of creative confiscated prison weapons, some with back stories.



Materials: Stainless steel tablespoon; handle wrapped with upholstery.

Backstory: At its core here is a spoon, stolen from the staff dining room at Rahway, where, as in many federal penitentiaries, inmates were restricted to using plastic flatware. Stamped "State of NJ," the spoon likely to have been sharpened on the cement floor or wall of a cell. The bowl of the spoon was filled with wax and then wrapped with upholstery thread (taken from the furniture shop, where it was used to re-stitch chair cushions) thereby forming a generously-scaled handle.

Many more disturbing, but creative and effective weapons below. Get Your Shank ON



Materials: Wood strip; five large razor blades glued into one side; six small razor blades glued into other and wrapped with boxing tape, rbylith and clear tape; handle wrapped with boxing tape.

Backstory: Lifted from the facility's metal sign shop, this shiv is wrapped in "rbylith" — a red, masking tape classically used in signmaking (and, before the digital revolution, commonly employed by graphic designers in the production of "mechanicals"). Eleven disposable razor blades, available for purchase from Rahway's commissary back in the 1980s, are carefully inserted down the sides.



Materials: Iron band from bed slat bent back and around to form handle.



Materials: Steel rod; handle wrapped with boxing tape.



Materials: Iron plate; handle wrapped with electrical tape.



Materials: Iron band from bed slat; handle wrapped with electrical tape over boxing tape.



Materials: Steel carpenter's square.

Backstory: A carpenter's square was shaved to a point using metal snips found in the prison sign shop, where many state highway and traffic signs are still made each year.



Materials: Shard of plexiglas; handle wrapped with electrical tape.



Materials: “Unbreakable” plastic comb; three single-edge razor blades inserted into teeth; wrapped with copper wire and shoelace.

Backstory: During the 1980s, a modest stipend of \$1.10 per day was deposited into each working prisoner’s personal account. The comb and shoelace used here were available from the prison commissary at that time. By completing an order form, prisoners could make purchases and tailor a shiv to their own design specifications.



Materials: Gardening glove with smaller glove inside; four steel upholstery tacks, each with three sharp points exposed, sewn between gloves.

Backstory: A pair of gardening gloves were issued to an inmate assigned to outdoor landscape detail. The sharp metal points beneath the cloth are actually the bottom sides of four inverted upholstery tacks, lifted from the furniture shop and stitched into the knuckles of the glove: the idea here is that the points become more pronounced when the user makes a fist.



Materials: Carriage return from typewriter; U-clamp attached to side; handle wrapped with boxing tape, string, upholstery thread and fragments of dried putty.

Backstory: By law, prisoners must be provided materials to have an opportunity to prepare their own legal defenses. In the 1980s, typewriters were made available for this purpose: the long, notched “spear” here is the carriage return from a prison-issued typewriter. The handle was wrapped with tape is likely to have been taken from Rahway’s boxing facility, where several world-class boxers trained, including Rubin “Hurricane” Carter.