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How to Use a Rivet Cutter to Trim Rivets

When a rivet of the right length is not on the shelf, trim a longer one.

Two kinds of cutter

Cutter	How to use it
Rotary rivet cutter	Insert the rivet in the correct hole in the cutter, place the required number of shims under the rivet head, and squeeze like pliers. Rotation of the discs cuts the rivet to the right length, set by the shims
Large rivet cutter	Place it in a vise, insert the rivet in the proper hole, cut by pulling the handle, which shears off the rivet
Substitute	If regular rivet cutters are not available, diagonal cutting pliers can be used

Typical mistakes

Mistake	What happens	Fix
Wrong hole for the rivet diameter	Rough cut, damaged rivet	Match hole to rivet
Wrong number of shims	Rivet too long or short	Check the length before use
Large cutter held by hand	Slips	Place in a vise
Using diagonal pliers carelessly	A distorted cut end	Only as a substitute; check the cut

Key points

- **Not approved data.** The repair data names the rivet and its length; trimming is for when the drawing's rivet is unavailable in that length and the data allows it.
- **No shim thicknesses.** The Handbook gives none; use the cutter maker's.

SOURCES · FAA-H-8083-31B, AMT Handbook: Airframe, Chapter 4

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Educational reference only, not approved data. Always consult the applicable SRM, AMM, or AC 43.13-1B and your certifying authority.

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