

## Merkur Futur Adjustable Safety Razor

Written by Mike Sandoval  
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The adjustable safety razor is an innovation that allows a wet shaver to adjust the blade gap of his razor to provide the right aggressiveness for his beard density and skin type. The design was patented on March 19, 1956, by inventors Meyer J. Shnitzler and Michael Douglas Benedict, Jr., but the first razor brought to the market was Gillette's Fat Boy in 1958. Over the next 25-ish years, Gillette produced approximately 14 models of adjustable safety razors. By contrast, Merkur produced only 3 models -- but unlike those from Gillette, the Merkur razors are still manufactured today. This article takes a closer look at one of these models, the Merkur Futur Adjustable Safety Razor.

The Merkur brand is well known among wet shavers, but many do not know that it was originally Emil-Hermes Solingen-Merscheid, named after its founder and location. In 1896, Emil Hermes began producing precision metal instruments, knives, and razors in Solingen, Germany. The company's logo featured an image of Hermes, the messenger of the Greek gods, wearing his signature winged helmet. The innovative company patented the [Slant Razor](#) in 1916. In 1917, Emil Hermes' widow took over the company, and in 1920 she changed the name to Hermes-Ern to include her maiden name. By this time, the firm was one of the largest producers of shaving accessories and razors under numerous trade names, including Merkur, the German name for Mercury, the Roman god equivalent of Hermes.



In 1922, Ms. Ern changed the company's name again to Emil Hermes Merkur-Werk, and she continued to manage the firm until 1930. It continued to manufacture a wide range of metal products, including knives and clippers as well as popular shaving instruments, such as straight razors, safety razors, and razor blades, over the next several decades. By 1980, the firm was owned by Wolfgang Hannemann, which patented the Merkur Futur Adjustable Safety Razor in 1983. In 1996, Merkur was acquired by Dovo Solingen, who continues the brand today.

Although most of the razors currently offered by Merkur are traditional [two-piece and](#)

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### [three-piece designs](#)

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unscrew to allow for changing the blade, the Futur boasts a more contemporary and elegant look that sets it apart from other models. The Futur features a smooth finish throughout the entire body with no knurling or patterns on the gripping surface of the razor. The handle of the Futur is longer than the traditional short-grip razors and provides plenty of space for those who have larger hands or prefer the feel of a longer razor. The overall weight of over four ounces (122 grams) gives it a nice hefty and solid feel, which is a characteristic that is preferred by many traditional wet shavers.

The cutting head of the Merkur Futur is where the design stands apart from other safety razors on the market. The Futur features a large and more bulky cutting head that extends well past the width of the double edge blade itself. The head has a snap-on top plate that is secured in place by two pins that snap onto the bottom half of the cutting head assembly and hold the blade securely in place during shaving. This method of installing the blade in the razor can be awkward at first for some users because the top plate of the cutting head has to be snapped off rather than released by a screw mechanism like most razors. The top plate of the razor has a groove on one side that allows for a secure point to place your finger and pull up on the plate. After changing the blade a few times, the removal of the top plate becomes more familiar and less awkward for the user.



In addition to the other unique design aspects of the Futur, the cutting head allows the user to adjust the [razor's aggressiveness](#) . The handle is numbered with adjustment settings from 1 to 6 with half marks between each number. By turning the handle, the user can raise and lower the cutting head to create a larger or smaller blade gap. When a safety razor set at 1, it will have the smallest blade gap, so that less of the double edged blade is exposed. Those with sensitive skin or lighter hair may prefer this lower setting so that they can have a less aggressive shave. When the razor is set at 6, the head of the razor is raised to create a larger gap, which exposes more of the blade. Men with thicker beards or coarser hair may prefer this setting because it is a more aggressive shave.

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When using the Merkur Futur for the first time, start at 1 and gradually increase the blade exposure to find the intensity that works for your skin type and beard density. Beginners to traditional shaving may spend more time tinkering with the adjustment dial than learning the appropriate pressure and cutting angle, so I strongly recommend becoming proficient with fixed-head models before turning to adjustable safety razors. Many men have a tendency to experiment with different dial positions and may end up in an endless cycle of confusion and skin irritation. Perfect your cutting angle and technique with a [Merkur 34C](#) and revisit the Merkur Futur when you have more experience with traditional shaving.



The Futur is designed so that the turning action of the adjustable feature is very tight so that it is unlikely that it could accidentally turn and change the blade gap while shaving. Because of the smooth finish design, making adjustments or blade changes to the Futur with wet or slippery hands can be an issue. Removal of the top of the cutting head requires a secure grip to prevent fingers from accidentally slipping into the razor blade. The sides of the cutting head must be held securely while the handle is rotated to the desired setting. To avoid accidental injury, make any needed changes to the razor while your hands are dry before handling any soap or lather. If for any reason you need to change the blade or adjustment settings during the shave, use a dry towel to grip the razor to avoid any problems.

During the shave, the Merkur Futur feels nice in the hand and is well balanced for a larger and heavier razor. The Futur does a great job on most areas of the face; however, shaving under the nose with it can be quite a challenge because of its large cutting head. This cutting head can make it difficult for some men to shave small areas of the face. While shaving the larger flat areas of the face, such as the cheeks and neck, the razor does a great job of feeling comfortable in the hand and maintaining good maneuverability around the curves of the jaw line with no problems. The snap-on head of the razor keeps the blade secure and prevents it from shifting or ratting around inside the cutting head.

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The Futur, along with Merkur's [Progress](#) and Vision, are today's options for adjustable razors in addition to Gillette's [vintage models](#). The Futur is precisely engineered and advertised as "environmentally compatible," since the steel is not combined with plastic or other materials. In addition, it is an attractive razor that is available in several finishes.

### [Lee's Safety Razors offers the Futur](#)

in polished or satin chrome finish for \$70.95 USD or a polished gold finish for \$84.95 USD. The modern design is both visually appealing and provides a great level of functionality. The Merkur Futur Adjustable Safety Razor is highly recommended if you are an experienced wet shaver who would like to add a solid and well-built adjustable razor to your rotation.

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