

## Guidelines for Purchasing Tools

A good basic set of tools will help you handle many of your home maintenance and repair projects. If you're assembling your first set, here are a few recommendations on which tools are important to have and how to select from the many options that are available to you.

When selecting a base set of tools, remember that versatility is key. Our recommendations consider tools that have more than one use, which will enhance your tool collection, without adding another tool.

The quality of your tools is important because you'll use this base set for years to come. In order to keep from spending a lot of money, you'll have to decide where to invest more money for good quality and where to save it.

A quick comment on packaged tool sets -

- If you're purchasing tools to have around in case of emergency, like a first aid kit, then an inexpensive packaged set may be just the ticket.
- Don't be enticed into getting a package with lots and lots of tools. Often the numbers of tools is impressive, but the quality of the tools is lacking. Focus on getting a good basic set and not a bunch of tools that will seldom be used.
- If it's easier to get a packaged set, invest the money to purchase a basic set of quality tools. Consider a Craftsmen set, because Craftsmen hand tools are guaranteed to last forever.

Here is our recommendation for a base set of tools:



### 1. **Hammer**

Good for wacking things, but for a beginner there is no reason to sink a lot of money into a good hammer. There are a few different types to choose from, but if this is your first, a claw hammer is a good selection. Weight-wise, select what feels good in your hand, but remember that you need a little weight to drive a nail. We recommend 16 oz.



### 2. **Screwdriver**

For a basic set, there is no reason to get a set of 6 or 8 different screwdrivers. Instead select a screwdriver with removable, magnetic tips. When you're in the middle of a project, you'll have just what you need at your finger tips. As an added bonus, the magnetic tips can be used with your drill, which we'll get to in a moment.



### 3. **Adjustable Wrench**

When you're looking at adjustable wrenches, check to be sure that there isn't any movement in the jaws of the wrench. You want the wrench to stay where you set it, without opening a bit wider, which could round the head of a bolt, thus ruining it. We recommend a 10" adjustable wrench, which works nicely for small bolts and nuts, but also opens wide enough to fit many larger bolt sizes.



### 4. **Robogrips**

Robogrips are a great gripping tool and we can't think of any reason not to substitute these for slip-joint pliers, an old staple in many toolboxes. Unlike slip-joint pliers, robogrips adjust as you squeeze them so that they grip tightly while not requiring a lot of hand strength. Get a small pair (7") instead of pliers and if you have a little money left over, add a larger 10" pair.



### 5. **Diagonal Cutting Pliers**

These are a great utility tool for cutting stuff, pulling nails, gripping, etc. A must have for your base set. We recommend the 6" or 7" size.



### 6. **Putty Knife**

Another great utility tool. It's perfect for wall repair, scraping and a lot of other uses. These come with a flexible blade or firm blade and both have their advantages. A firm blade is great for really tough use. A flexible blade is a little better for wall repair. Either way, get a hammer head so you can hit it with a hammer without fear of breaking the hammer. We recommend a 3-4" blade.

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### 7. Utility Knife

We like a snap blade utility knife. You'll always have a sharp blade because the replacements are right at your finger tips, and changing the blade is literally a snap. Typically there are two sizes available. We suggest the larger as the blade is firmer and less likely to bend or break. Take care when using this tool, it looks innocent enough, but can be dangerous.



### 8. Torpedo Level

A torpedo level is a great addition to your base tools. While a longer level is generally more accurate, this little level is very handy for hanging things properly and fits nicely into your tool kit. Look for one that is a little bit rugged as a drop can cause a level to become inaccurate.



### 9. Tape Measure

This is a matter of preference. Get a minimum of 12' length and select your tape measure based on what feels right in your hand and what you can read clearly. You can spend a lot on a tape measure, but if you need to keep your costs down, this is a tool where you might consider selecting an inexpensive one.



### 10. Wire Strippers/Cutter/Crimper

If you're never going to do any electrical work, you can remove this from your list. But if you think you might, this is a great, versatile tool. It is the one tool that you will have in your hand most often when doing electrical work. Make sure the tool says that it is a stripper, cutter and crimper.



### 11. Flash Light

If you have a working flashlight that lives in your toolkit, you'll be surprised how often you reach for it. Selecting a flashlight is a matter of personal preference. Select one based on how it feels in your hand and look for one that will survive a drop.



### 12. Cordless Drill

This will be your biggest investment and if you're working on a budget, you might wait on the drill. You can do many of your home repair and maintenance projects without this tool.

But, when you're ready, a cordless drill opens up a much larger world to you. Projects that once took a long time, are now much quicker. What used to take a fair amount of strength, now takes much less. A cordless drill does what it says, drilling holes, but it also works as a cordless screwdriver, which can be a huge timesaver.

Here are some tips for selecting a cordless drill. Again, pick them up and select what feels good in your hands, based on the following criteria:

- Get a minimum of 12 volt drill
- Get a drill with 2 batteries. Some have only one, leaving you with a drill that has a drained battery and no backup option.
- Lithium Ion – This is the latest battery and is a tremendous improvement on NI-Cad batteries, though it comes at higher cost. This battery makes the drill much lighter in weight, and holds its charge. We've used drills that have held their charge after sitting unused for 3 or 4 months. A drill w/Ni-Cad batteries would likely be completely drained after sitting for the same length of time. Because of this, Ni-Cad batteries have a tendency to fail and will no longer take a charge.



### 13. Drill Bits

Select a set of at least 13 bits. Look for wood and metal drill bits for your basic set. Pilot point bits are great for keeping the drill bit in place as you begin to drill.



### 14. Toolbag

You're going to need somewhere to store your tools. We love an electrician's toolbag for organizing and transporting your basic set. This is also a matter of personal preference. Select something that you will pick up and haul to the site of your project so that your basic tools are close at hand.