

# The Absolute Essential Tools Every Do-It-Yourselfer Must Own

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One of the biggest problems do-it-yourselfers encounter is either not having the right tool for the project at hand, or not having any tools. And it's no wonder why this happens. There are SO many tools on the market, it's almost impossible to decide which tools you really need.

And if you're like me, the last thing you want to do is waste money on tools that; you'll only use once, break before you're finished using them, are simply not the right tool for the job.

I know, because I've been there.

Over the years I have bought, used, and discarded more tools than I can remember. But through it all I learned which tools work best, which one's don't and, even more importantly, which tools I couldn't live without.

After all my experience with tools, some good and some bad, I have created this list of the most-valuable DIY homeowner tools. An absolute essential collection of tools every do-it-yourselfer should have to take on just about any HOME IMPROVMENT projects.

This list is divided into three tool sections; **Everyday Essentials** (basic list of hand tools you'll need and use on a regular basis), **More Essentials** (tools you'll use less often but are still necessary in undertaking your home do-it-yourself projects), and **Power Tools** (a list of the basics you'll need for larger projects.)

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**Remember, these are recommendations.** The point is that you have the tools, not that you have these *exact* brands. So when the time comes to upgrade or replace a tool you can use this list as a guide.

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# **Everyday Essentials**

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## EVERYDAY ESSENTIAL TOOLS

This basic set of tools will allow you to confidently tackle most projects and *succeed with speed*.

Most of my hand tools are purchased from Sears because of the Craftsman, **no questions asked, lifetime replacement guarantee**. So, if you break, wear out or damage a tool, it can be **replaced for free** at any Sears store.

Sure there are cheaper tools available but it's never worth trying to save a little when it will cost you twice as much later. Anyway, you can't go wrong with Craftsman's quality and guarantee.

I've been using this tool set successfully everyday for years, so I'm confident they'll work for you too.

The listed sizes are recommended for their versatility so you don't have to purchase multiple sizes of the same tool.

Just a note to say that I also find it essential to own a cordless drill. So even though I've listed a great cordless drill in the Power Tools section, I would recommend buying and including one as part of your own set of Everyday Essential Tools.

Well here's the list, including descriptions and prices.

# The Absolute Essential Tools Every Do-It-Yourselfer Must Own

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## Tape Measure 1 in. blade & 25 ft. long (about \$9)

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A tape measure is indispensable but there are so many to choose from these days. I have bought, used, wore out, wrecked and returned many over the years. I have



always returned to the Stanley Powerlock 25 ft. because it always works, even under the toughest circumstances and it only cost \$9. So, if I wreck or lose it, I don't feel as bad as the one I tried, that cost me \$28. Remember, the whole point is to buy

what you can afford and use what is comfortable for you.

DIY

***DIY Tip:** You can also use your tape measure as a straight edge for drawing lines and keeping things in line.*

## 5 pc. Combo Screwdriver (about \$10)

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Combo screwdrivers are also indispensable.

I once had about 22 different screwdrivers.

This was **one reason** why my tool box was so heavy. Once I bought my first combo screwdriver, I found

that I never missed all the others. And for most jobs a combo set does a fine job.

Having said all that I do own and recommend that you have a standard and Phillips stubby screwdriver.

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## Stubby Screwdrivers (about \$4 each)

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I also recommend you have a standard and phillips stubby screwdriver on hand. They're fantastic for getting into the hard to reach places and don't take up much space.

## 7 pc. Nut Driver Set (about \$26)

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A set of nut drivers are great for working with sheet metal screws on appliances, cars and other machines around the house. Many sheet metal screws have a nut type head and may have a standard or phillips slot also. I've found that the right size nut driver

is far easier to use on these fasteners than any screwdriver or socket. The most popular sizes are 1/4 and 5/16 in.

## 6 pc. Precision Screwdriver Set (about \$4)

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Precision screwdriver sets are hand for the really small work, like on your glasses, computer and other household items.

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## 8 in. Slip Joint Pliers (about \$9)

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Regular slip joint pliers and the great all around gripper. The 8 in. size is very versatile and inexpensive. You can also use them for cutting wire.

## 8 in. Needle Nose Pliers (about \$17)

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Needle nose pliers, with insulated handles, are great for electrical work. For bending and handling wires they are the best. They also work for picking up and holding small objects, as well as cutting wire. The 8 in. size is the standard.

## 10 in. Channel Lock Pliers (about \$10)

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10 in. channel lock pliers are the most versatile pliers, as they adjust wide enough to handle most nuts and bolts as well as plumbing pipes and fixtures.



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## 8 in. Linesman Pliers (about \$21)

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8" Linesman pliers are by far the best electrical tool around. A must for any electrical job. They easily twist wires together, cut most all electrical wire, as well as fencing and are great for pulling small nails and staples.

## 5 in. Diagonal Cutting Pliers (about \$14)

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Diagonal cutting pliers are in my box for just cutting wire, nails and getting into small spaces. Some tools don't have to have a great variety of uses but just do a great job for what they were intended for.

## 10 in. Locking Curved Jaw Pliers (about \$19)

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Locking pliers or vise grips are just like having an extra hand. Since they lock, they are most useful for holding nuts while tightening the bolt, holding pipe, gripping stubborn or stripped nuts and as a clamp in a pinch.

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## 10 in. Crescent Wrench (about \$16)

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The 10" crescent wrench is the most versatile of the adjustable wrenches. Used for nuts and bolts as well as bending metal.

## 5-1/2 in. Long Mini Bar Nail Puller (about \$5)

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The mini flat bar is my favorite small demo tool. It's great for removing trim, tile and prying most small items without damage. It really gets into those small spaces. Also great for helping those stuck screws to come out when they only want to spin and come out half way.

## Professional Wire Cutter-Stripper Pliers (about \$13)

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Wire cutter/strippers are the only tool for stripping wire. Your teeth are not wire strippers. Using any other pliers could damage the electrical wire resulting in wires breaking or arcing, which could cause fire. A good set of wire strippers are inexpensive and will last a good long time.

# The Absolute Essential Tools Every Do-It-Yourselfer Must Own

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## 9 pc. Dual Material Fold Up Hex Key Set (Standard) (about \$12)

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The fold up hex key set or allen wrenches are a good convenience item to have in any tool box. If you run into an allen screw you'll probably have the right size on hand.

## Stud Finder (about \$16)

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Stud finders are definitely a great tool for accurately finding studs in a wall. Banging on the wall with a hammer, knuckles or doing exploratory searching with a finish nail is just silly when you can use a stud finder. The stud finder will not only help you locate the stud but each side of the stud as well.

## 9 in. Torpedo Level (about \$6)

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Torpedo levels are most handy when you don't really need a 4' level or you are in a tight space. Great too for working in the yard with stone projects, as you can easily carry the level in your pocket. One side of these levels are magnetic for hands free use.

# The Absolute Essential Tools Every Do-It-Yourselfer Must Own

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## Craftsman Flat Profile Utility Knife (about \$10)

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A utility knife is a must as it is good for cutting, marking and most importantly sharpening your pencil.

## 3 pc. Chisel Set (about \$14)

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Having a chisel set is critical for any woodworker. Trimming parts to an exact size, notching, mortising, carving and for demo work, the chisel is must.

**DIY**

**DIY Tip:** Use a flat chisel for removing the caulking around you tub. It works great and no scratching.

## Chalk Line (about \$7)

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My chalk line gets a lot of use, like snapping lines for cutting wood, metal, plastic, lining up post for fences and decks, calculating grade and laying out projects to just name a few. Tip... blue chalk shows up better on wood than red.

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## 7 in. Swanson Speed Square (about \$7)

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The Swanson speed square has so many uses besides drawing a cutting line. Here's just a few, calculating angles, stairs, rafters and as a guide fence for your saw. Buy one, read the book and you'll be surprised how many things you can do with this tool.

## Hand Saw (about \$18)

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Hand saws come in various sizes and shapes but one thing is true they can be used anywhere. I find the 15 in. 12 pt. Craftsman just perfect for all my needs.

## 16 oz. Straight Claw Hammer (about \$9)

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The straight claw hammer is the most versatile hammer for the DIY'er. It's size and weight are easy for most people to use and the straight claw is great for getting into the smaller spaces. This hammer will handle most of the work you have around the house with ease.

# The Absolute Essential Tools Every Do-It-Yourselfer Must Own

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## BEST TOOLBOX EVER !

### Stanley 25 Adjustable Deep Compartment Storage Organizer (about \$10)

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I have had owned so many tool boxes over the years—but this one is definitely the best. With exception of the Chaulk Line, Speed Square, Hand Saw, and Claw Hammer, **this box will hold all of your Everyday Essential Tools**. It's light weight, has a built-in handle with two locking tabs and lid lock so everything stays in place. For more information, [read this article](#).

Only available from Home Depot or [through their website](#).



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# **More Essentials**

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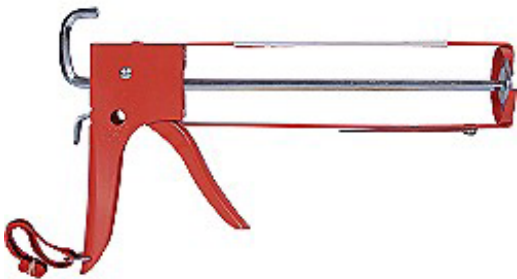
## MORE ESSENTIAL TOOLS

Here are a few more essential tools that come in handy. These are not used as often as the basic everyday essentials set but are great for advanced plumbing, electrical, demo and many other projects.

**Remember.** It's more important that you have these tools, not that you have these exact brands. That said, if you need to purchase new tools, these are my personal recommendations.

### Caulking Gun (about \$5)

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Caulking guns are far easier to use than squeezing a tube. So buy a good one as they only cost around \$5 and will probably last a lifetime for the DIY'er.

### Hack Saw (about \$9)

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A hack saw is typically used for cutting metal, such as pipes, rebar, bolts and steel.

**DIY**

**DIY Tip:** Hack saws are also great for cutting small trim pieces like base board, door trim and metal frames. Just use it with your miter box and you'll be pleasantly surprised.



# The Absolute Essential Tools Every Do-It-Yourselfer Must Own

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## Miter Saw (about \$9)

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The miter saw and box is great for all types of trim jobs, as well as cutting pvc.

**DIY**

***DIY Tip:** Use a clamp to hold the miter box to your bench. Doing this will allow you to use your free hand to steady your work.*

## 14 in. Pipe Wrench (about \$26)

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Having a pipe wrench on hand sure makes things easier than trying to use a pair of pliers, especially in an emergency. Pipe wrenches give you the grip and leverage you need for dealing with plumbing and gas pipes.

## Tube Cutter (about \$15)

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A tube cutter is, without a doubt, the easiest way to cut copper pipe. Once you used one you won't be using that hack saw any time soon.

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## Propane Soldering Kit (about \$40)

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If you are going to be doing any plumbing with copper you will surely need a propane soldering kit. You don't need anything fancy, just the basics. Propane gas cylinder, adjustable nozzle, solder and flux.

You'll also need a **Pipe Cleaner** (about \$10)

Emery cloth will also work for cleaning copper pipes and fittings.

## Multi Meter (about \$20)

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A multimeter is a must have when doing electrical work. These tell you, among other things and most importantly, if there power to the wire, switch or outlet that you are testing. **Always check the circuit before you begin work, even if you've already turned off the breaker.**

## Quick Grip Clamps (about \$15)

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Quick grip clamps have so many functions and are so easy to use. From securing tools to benches, to holding a straight edge, these clamps have hundreds of uses. It's hard to get by without these little wonders.

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## 48 in. Level (about \$26)

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You really can't have a project come out well without a level. Being plumb and level are the two top priorities in building.

**DIY**

***DIY Tip:** Use a level held by quick grip clamps to act as a guide fence. Excellent for making those perfect cuts.*

## 11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. Cats Paw/Nail Puller (about \$15)

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The cats paw is the ultimate in nail pulling tools. No DIY'er should be without one.

## 3 pc. Snip Set (about \$16)

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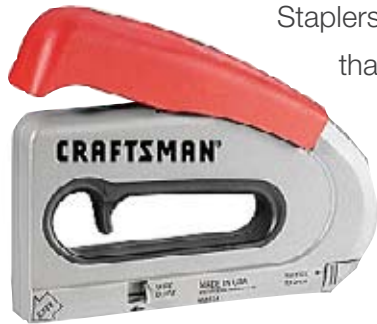
Nippers are critical when dealing with any sheet metal project. They're ones that cut to the left, to the right and straight. (remember having the right tool for the job saves time and frustration, as well as having the project look great)

# The Absolute Essential Tools Every Do-It-Yourselfer Must Own

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## Stapler/Brad Nailer / Forward Action™ (about \$23)

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Staplers are the tool for securing cloth, plastic, insulation or for that matter anything that just requires light weight holding power. The forward action staplers are far easier to use than the ones you have to squeeze, especially if you have a bunch of stapling to do. There are many different sizes of staples so use the right size (depth) for the job.

**DIY**

**DIY Tip:** *It's better to rent the right tool for the day, instead of buying it, especially if it's a tool you may not use again.*

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# **Power Tools**

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## POWER TOOLS: STARTER SET

Here is a list of essential power tools for the do it yourself. There are so many choices out there, so I selected these models to assemble this DIY Power Tools Starter Set.

If you have any questions about tools or are interested in a recommendation on any tool, please contact me for the best deals available.

Once again, if you're buying or replacing tools, these are my personal recommendations, for a do-it-yourself starter set, based on years of professional experience.

### **Makita 12 volt Cordless Drill** (about \$109)

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This Makita is inexpensive and a reliable work horse and it comes with 2 batteries, charger and case.

You can [purchased the drill here](#).

# The Absolute Essential Tools Every Do-It-Yourselfer Must Own

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## Speed Lock (about \$9)

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This essential power tools accessory allows you to change bits and drivers in a snap! Works great with any power drill.

## Circular Saw Available in right- or left-handed. (about \$139)

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Milwaukee makes a great saw with an adjustable handle. [Check out my article](#) about circular saws for more information. You can [order this saw here](#).

## Jig Saw (about \$77)

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The tool you'll need to cut slots, holes, and curves. You can [order this jig saw here](#). Or, if you'd like help picking out a jig saw, just drop me an email.

# The Absolute Essential Tools Every Do-It-Yourselfer Must Own

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## Reciprocating Saw (about \$70)

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One of the most useful saws you will own. From cutting metal to demo work, this saw does it all.

## 1/2 in. Corded Drill (about \$50)

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This is the tool to use when boring holes for door hardware or running electrical wire through studs.

## Makita Orbital Sander (about \$70)

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Definitely the all around finish sander.



# The Absolute Essential Tools Every Do-It-Yourselfer Must Own

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## Chop/Miter Saw (about \$100)

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The saw to have for most any DIY job. From trim to frames, from repetitive cuts to chopping studs, this is the saw to own.

## 10 in. Bench Top Table Saw (about \$120)

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This saw will make short work of re-sizing most lumber. Great for cabinet and furniture work.

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