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Sixteen Essential Tools For Every New Homeowner's Tool Kit

Posted by Arthur Beam on August 18, 2017

Going from renting an apartment to owning a home is never as easy as it sounds. Besides the new mortgage and deciding on new furniture and appliances, you can no longer call the apartment manager to fix your broken toilet or light switch – that's on you now. But as long as you have access to YouTube and these 16 essential tools in your tool kit, you can learn how to repair almost anything in your new home with minimum fuss.



New homeowners are eager to ramp up quickly, but slow your roll: You don't need to run out and spend hundreds of dollars on every tool you *might* possibly need at some point. For the big jobs like kitchen rehabs (if you're so inclined), buy tools as you need them. You'll find that the majority of household tasks like tightening screws, assembling furniture, pounding nails and cutting wood can be done with a handful of basic tools.

Tip: *Buy high quality tools and they should last a lifetime.*

1. Hammer

A 16oz claw hammer is a workhorse and your go-to tool when hammering or pulling nails, or the occasional light demolition. Choose a hammer with a heavier weight to deliver the most force per blow, a comfortable grip and anti-vibe technology, because if you're using it all day, the grip and AV tech will save a lot of muscle fatigue. For the most common tasks of nail pulling, choose a hammer with a straight claw, a comfortable grip and anti-vibe technology, because if you're using it all day, the grip and AV tech will save a lot of muscle fatigue. For the most common tasks of nail pulling, choose a hammer with a straight claw, straight claws are best for pulling large nails and prying wood apart. Choose a hammer with a smooth head to avoid surface damage and nail slippage.

[See our selection of claw hammers.](#)

2. Set of screwdrivers

You'll probably use a set of screwdrivers more often than any other tool in your new home, so look for quality. Choose a set of screwdrivers with both flat heads and Phillips heads, and pick a high-quality brand. Lesser quality screwdrivers are notorious for not fitting screw heads correctly, which wears the tips of your screwdrivers down and causes screw heads to strip, making them impossible to remove. Spring for the set with the widest variety of sizes. Even if you're buying a set of drivers for your cordless drill, you'll need a hand set too for small, quick tasks.

[Stanley 6-piece vinyl grip screwdriver set.](#)

3. Utility knife

You'll probably use your utility knife on a regular basis, so don't cheap-out here. It's essential for opening that deluge of cardboard boxes from Amazon, cutting fabric, plastic sheeting, zip ties, drop cloths, wire, burlap, duct tape, bags, canvas, carpeting, and scraping window paint from a stuck window. Don't forget the blades.

[See our selection of utility knives.](#)

[Utility knife blades.](#)

4. Adjustable wrench or combination wrench set



At the very least, you'll need a few combination wrenches in various sizes to loosen and tighten hex bolts, assemble a lawn mower or furniture and similar tasks. When buying, you'll notice that combination wrenches are marked as SAE or Metric - SAE wrenches are sized in inches and fractions of inches and Metric wrenches are sized in Millimeters. But as you don't know what size you'll need until you need it, you're best off buying a set of each with the most common sizes. Later, you can step up to a ratchet and socket set for more specific uses. You should also have an adjustable wrench, which holds its size after adjusting it. This really comes in handy when making emergency plumbing repairs and getting big screws unstuck, or when you need to loosen or tighten screws in areas where a combination wrench won't work.

[See our selection of wrenches.](#)

5. Hand saw

Old school you say? Not so fast. A hand saw needs no electricity, no rechargeable battery, and can be cutting wood in seconds. It's also quiet and can handle a number of jobs a circular saw and jigsaw cannot. It's also a lot cheaper. A good starter handsaw for basic tasks is a 20 inch, 10 or 12 tooth crosscut saw (cuts across the grain). This handsaw will rip through most wood and some manmade materials too.

[See our selection of hand saws.](#)

6. Pliers

Use a pliers for when you need to hold one thing and turn another thing in the opposite direction. This happens more often than you imagine. There are many specific kinds of pliers for specific tasks, but as a rule of thumb, you always want to have at least one needle nose pliers for electrical work and one standard locking pliers for gripping, pulling, loosening and tightening. Needle nose pliers are also great for gripping things in tight spaces. You might also want to throw in a wire stripper for installing stereo gear and TV's, or running internet cable.

[Stanley 6" long nose pliers.](#)

6a. Multi-tool pliers

Buy a multitool pliers to carry in your pocket for quick fixes like tightening a screw on a cabinet drawer. It will save you a trip to the basement.

[Gerber 12-Tool Multi-Pliers.](#)

7. Tape measure

You won't be able to live without a tape measure. You'll need to figure how large a couch can fit in your living room and if the door is wide enough and tall enough for that couch to fit through (made a big personal mistake on that last one). You also need to measure the distance from couch to wall to decide on the perfect screen size for your new TV, spaces for appliances, distances from floor to eye level for wall decorations, measuring rooms to calculate painting and just about anything else that shouldn't or can't be eyeballed. A 25-foot or 35-foot tape measure is usually sufficient for most homeowners. Choose a heavy-duty model if you'll be working on your own a lot, as the heavier blade will lay flat and won't need to be held on the other end.



[See our selection of tape measures.](#)

8. Cordless Drill and drill bits

Cordless drills are indispensable for drilling holes and driving screws – especially when you have lots of screws to drive. An 18-volt variable speed reversing cordless drill is a workhorse around the house, wherever a hole needs to be drilled or a screw screwed. Choose a keyless chuck to change bits fast and a Lithium Ion rechargeable model, which holds a charge longer than the old NiCad batteries. Don't forget the drill bits and drivers.

[See our selection of cordless and corded drills.](#)

[Irwin 15-piece drill bit set.](#)

9. Loose nails and screws

Buy a tub of nails and screws of various sizes, because God knows you'll need them. 'Nuff said.

[Buy corrosion resistant common nails.](#)

[Buy stainless steel multi-purpose screws.](#)

10. Heavy duty flashlight



A flashlight isn't just for when the lights go out. You'll also need it for working in dark basements or under sinks. Don't cheap out here, as a discount flashlight won't last very long and will probably quit when you're in the middle of an important repair. Buy a heavy-duty model which will throw plenty of lumens and last for years. And remember, that iPhone flashlight is bright, but it's probably a bad idea to use it when water is spewing from bathroom pipes like a geyser. It also doesn't take well to being dropped on a cement floor.

[Buy NEBO RedLine Blast 1400 Lumen flashlight.](#)

11. Level

Why do you need a level? Simple: you're going to be hanging pictures in your new home and eyeballing it takes forever. You can also use it to level your new refrigerator so the door doesn't keep closing on you, and if you're hanging a new entryway door, it's impossible to do without a level. There are sophisticated digital models, but you can go old school inexpensively and find a level that's quite accurate. An old school level has an air bubble trapped in a liquid vial which shows you when your picture frame, refrigerator, door or anything else is straight horizontally or vertically. A good quality level will last many years. You might even pass it on to your kids.

[Buy Stabila Pocket Level Pro.](#)

12. Staple gun (hand powered)

From attaching wire fencing to wood posts to repairing upholstery, a staple gun is sure to spend a lot of time in your hands. You won't need a heavyweight staple gun for most tasks – choose a basic hand powered model to start. And don't forget the staples.

[Arrow T50 Staple Gun](#)

[T50 Staples](#)

13. 12-inch speed square or combination square

Your school ruler won't do when you're measuring and cutting wood for precise fits and angles. Neither will your new tape measure. Right angles are key to successful carpentry and keeping your home standing, so you'll want a 12-inch speed square for measuring 90 degree or 45 degree angles and for drawing accurate lines from point to point on wood and other surfaces you intend to cut. Choose a combination square for laying out lines on lumber for cutting. The Head, which contains a level, can measure precise angles and slides along the ruler and locks.

[Stanley Quick Square Layout Tool.](#)

14. Handheld circular saw

If you're going to be cutting a lot of lumber, plywood, shelving, decking, or similar materials for a home improvement project, keep the hand saw in your tool box and reach for the circular saw. Handheld circular saws come in a variety of sizes, but the most useful for most home projects is 7-1/4". Make sure you choose a blade which is the same size as the saw and is designed for the materials you'll be cutting. Handheld circular saws are available in corded or cordless models.



[See our circular saws.](#)

15. Metal snips/tin snips

You may not use a metal snips very often, but you'll be so happy you have one when you suddenly need to cut wire fencing or thin metals like tin. Make sure the snips has an ergonomic grip to protect your hands.

[See our Snips.](#)

16. Tool Kit

How are you going to carry your tools? In a paper bag? A shoebox? Get a tool organizer which will hold everything you need for the job, along with pencils, loose nails and screws.

[Custom Leathercraft Bigmouth Tool Bag.](#)

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