

Basic Tools for Renovators



by Allan Staines

Even if you are inexperienced, most home repairs and projects are very logical and require mostly commonsense plus a little 'tool sense' and there are some tools that are indispensable around the home:

Hammer: Try for a 16oz or 20oz depending on your physical build - are you petite or a bear? When buying a 'cheap' hammer, check that the crown is rounded and not flat (the crown is the surface which strikes the nail). Once you've bought it, be sure it's not used for jobs which could damage the crown (e.g. chipping concrete).

Portable Drill/Driver: You'll find this invaluable for those odd jobs of putting up curtain rods, towel rails, shelves and the like. If you're really into DIY projects, seriously consider a 10mm reversible variable speed model.

Check the handle for comfort. The drill should feel balanced in order for you to feel confident using it. If you can get one with a spare battery, and put this spare on the charger the evening before your renovation project.

Hand Saw: For the only-occasional user, a cross cut panel or fine toothed saw is another tool that's a good stand-by. Although, if you're smart, you'll ask the hardware or timber mill to cut wood to size (most offer this service, otherwise cabinetmakers will usually oblige).

If you intend more serious woodwork or renovation work, look at a 184mm portable circular saw. This size is perfectly adequate for most situations even for the tradesman. Again check the weight of each tool as some are overly heavy for a slightly built person. A lighter weight motor is OK if you always keep a sharp spare blade.

Tape Measure: Buy yourself a 3 metre or 5 metre retractable tape. Be sure the figures are easy to read and please remember to not leave it out in the rain! It will rust as many handypersons have found out, damaging its smooth retractability. Also, don't let the hook slam into the case. This will stretch the rivet holes, and give you an inaccurate measurement.

Screwdrivers & Pliers: You'll need two or three screwdriver sizes with slotted and Phillips heads. Buying cheap ones is a waste of time as inevitably they burr and twist under pressure, particularly when trying to move very tight screws.

Look for quality pliers with insulated handles and the ability to cut wire. Again, these must feel comfortable in you hand, and be sturdy.

Safety Gear: There are no shortcuts when it comes to safety gear. Eye protection is a must, and so are dust and fume masks if you value your lungs.

Don't overlook the importance of footwear and protective clothing depending on the job your doing. A quality pair of overalls can suit you for all your renovation needs, and a good set of robust gloves will protect your hands from minor cuts and burns.

Caulking Gun: You'll generally need a cartridge of adhesive, silicone sealant and a caulking gun for many of your home renovation projects. It makes application easier when sealing leaks around windows and doors or anywhere a continuous bead is required.

Painting Gear: Being properly set up makes a world of difference! You'll need paint brushes of various sizes (generally a 75mm maximum for a woman), a 25mm or 38mm fitch or cutting-in brush, and rollers. Another necessity is something stable from which to paint, two saw-stools and a plank are typically ideal and safe.

Ladder: Every home needs a ladder to access those hard to reach parts of the house such as for clearing the gutters of debris and cleaning walls and windows.

It's never safe to work from the top rung of a ladder, so be sure to always have three points of contact with your ladder, to avoid falling. Also, beware of cheap light-weight stepladders. Depending on the weight of the work you're doing, they may not be able to take the strain.

With all your tools, always refer to the manufacturer's manual or handbook, and always read the safety instructions before use. Be careful when using your tools, and always employ the motto of safety first.