10 Secrets To Choose Your Tools For Homesteading

When you are on a tight budget, it is very tempting to buy the cheapest tools you can find. For example, if you need handsaw, you may be inclined to pick one up in a dollar store and then hope that it will get you through a few projects.

While these, and other tools may get you through a small project, they can also be very dangerous and of little or no use in a crisis situation.

The tools you have on hand may well need to last for decades or even be passed along for generations before suitable replacements can be made and distributed at an affordable price. That's why, when choosing tools for your homestead, or other bug in needs, you should keep the following ten points in mind.

1. How Versatile Is the Tool?

If you live in an apartment or a tiny home, then you are always going to be worried about how much room to allocate for tools.

In some cases, you will be best served by looking for tools that can accomplish a wide range of jobs without being ruined. At other times, you may need a tool that can be used for some applications, and then have a second tool that will do something similar.

Unless you need a particular tool for a specialized job, aim for the most durable multi-purpose tools you can find. Here are the factors to consider, especially when buying drill bits and cutting blades:

- A drill bit or cutting blade listed for use on wood or

plastic will most likely be ruined if you try to use it on metal.

- Simply choosing the cheapest metal working bits isn't much better than buying bits and blades for wood. For example, a drill bit designed to go through corrugated aluminum may not even go through a tin can.
- When choosing bits and blades, you are best served by getting the best possible metal working bits and blades. These will cut and drill through just about anything, and also last far longer than other types.

While you're assessing tool versatility, think about the range of applications and how well it will perform each task.

In some case, a few less specialized tools will actually be of more use. For example, you might think that a large toothed, large saw blade is the best option for all your woodworking or metal cutting needs. On the other hand, if you need to cut curves or work with a smaller, more delicate piece of material, then a coping saw will be of more use.

And there are always going to be times when you need socket wrenches to get into places where you cannot use a monkey wrench. There is a newer wrench on the market that basically uses a set of bearings to create an adjustable socket wrench. Keep one of these onhand for survival needs since it can be adjusted to both large and small socket sizes.

There is simply no telling how quickly this particular wrench type will wear out or how much strain it can take. If you want to keep one of these onhand, then work with it and put it through as much testing as possible, and then keep a brand new one aside for survival needs.

You should also keep good quality conventional metric and standard socket sets on hand just in case the multiple socket wrench fails.

2. How Long Is it Guaranteed to Last?

Do you remember the days when vehicle engines, transmissions, and drive trains were guaranteed to last well over 100,000 miles? If so, then you may also remember that a four year old car was considered relatively new instead of at the end of its best years.

As with cars, the warranties on many tools made today is much less. While you can still get good quality tools that will last a long time, nothing says trust in quality like a manufacturer that will guarantee the tools for life. Even though the manufacturer may be driven out of business by a major social collapse, neither you nor they will know when that will happen. Therefore, lifetime warranties can be used as one of the indicators of tool quality.

If you have a choice between a cheaper tool with a limited warranty and one with a lifetime warranty, go for the latter even if is a bit more expensive. Remember, you might use this tool for decades on end or even pass it along to the next generation. No matter whether the tool in question is a screwdriver bit set, pliers, or other hand tools, buying the best will pay off in the long run.

3. Are There Older Versions of the Tool that Might Be Cheaper and More Durable?

As with cars and just about everything else in stores these days, you will find that things just aren’t as durable as they used to be. From that perspective, you may actually be able to save some money and get good quality tools by visiting the local flea markets.

In some cases, older, well maintained tools may actually be more durable and work better than newer ones. Just stay away from ones that are excessively worn or show signs of deep rusting. Here are some tools that you can consider purchasing second hand in the vintage section:

- Hand power drills. These devices can truly last for

decades and beyond even if they show some signs of wear. Make sure that you can get drill bits into it, and that they will not slip when you apply pressure from the crank or other hand levers.

- Coping saw frames and hacksaw frames. As with other tools, make sure these are free of rust and that they are solid across the entire frame. Try to fit a new blade into them and make sure that the handle and blade holding areas will not give way under a work load.
- Any hand tool that has screws or other tightening apparatus that can be adjusted. Check that the adjusters have not been sheared off, are rusty, or stuck in place. In some cases you may be able to revive these tools, however it may be best to look for something in better condition.

4. What Kind of Maintenance Does It Need?

Even the best quality tools may require oiling, cleaning, and other kinds of maintenance, so you'll need to store away appropriate cleaners and lubricants. Other details may also be overlooked:

- Some types of steel blade need to be stored away from humidity. While they may work fine on a daily basis, storing them in a pre-crisis situation can be a bit difficult. For example, if you don't oil them once a month or use them on a regular basis, they may rust and be nothing but reddish dust when you open your survival bin. Even if you feel that your tools will resist rust and corrosion, examine them on a monthly basis even if you aren't using them.
- Blades, drill bits, and other tools are apt to wear down and need replacing. Depending on the blade type, you may be able to sharpen it several times before having to discard it. Have a good quality sharpener onhand, and use it as often as needed.

5. Does the Tool Require Replacement Parts?

If you visit a hardware store, you are sure to be amazed at the growing number of variations on common tools. For example, where you may have once bought a simple set of Philips and flathead screwdrivers, now you may be faced with an array of bits, ratcheting handles, power screwdrivers, reversible drill screwdrivers, and cordless screwdrivers.

When it comes to your survival toolkit, don't put all your reliance on power tools. Aside from problems with EMPs, battery operated tools will never be as strong as those with a power cord. Power tools are truly wonderful to use and very convenient, but they will be worse than useless if you do not have electricity to power them.

Oddly enough, even the most simple hand tools these days may require replacement parts. For example, even though you can buy screwdriver bit sets with dozens of bits in them, they tend to be less durable than full bodied screwdrivers.

When it comes to bit sets, even high quality ones will shear or wear down very quickly. You can, and should keep a high quality set onhand plus a ratcheting handle, but do not overlook full bodied screwdrivers. At the very least, you should have a few of the most popular sizes plus the short shank counterparts for tight areas.

Saws, drills, and other key tools also require replacement parts from time to time. If there is anything that you should stockpile, these items will be more important than anything else. Without a spare blade to replace one that is worn or broken, it will be impossible to complete a number of tasks. When it comes to bugging in, this is truly one place were storing more is better than storing away less.

6. What Kind of Activities Will Ruin It?

Have you ever used a screwdriver to open a can of paint, or

the back of a glass cutter to rap on a stubborn jar lid? If so, then you know that some tools are only limited by your imagination.

On the other hand, there are many woodworking tools that cannot be used on metal or plastic. There are also many metal working tools that cannot be used on solid metals or denser metals than they were designed for.

Always read manufacturer specs carefully so that you know what the limits of each tool is. In addition, before adding a tool to your survival stores, be sure to test it out. Try a number of different materials and see how much wear accumulates on the bits or blades.

Pay careful attention to the cutting surfaces. Do they appear darker as if they have been exposed to heat? Did the surface of the blade become even or appear worn? If any given tool cannot pass these basic tests, then return it to the store immediately and go up to the next highest priced tool. There is absolutely no sense in storing away tools that will wear out after one or two uses when you can replace them now and have confidence in their durability later on.

7. How Best to Use the Tool?

One of the worst things you can do is buy a tool and then figure you will know how to use it when the time comes. For example, even as you read this, you may have hammers, pliers, wrenches, and all kinds of other tools laying around the house. Even though a hammer may seem very simple to use, that does not mean you know how to get the most from it.

Among other things, you may be the type that has to whack a nail several dozen times just to get it through the wood. On the other hand, professional carpenters may be able to drive those nails with a single blow.

Take the time now to learn how to use tools efficiently. Not

only will you save wear and tear on the tools, you will find it much easier to complete tasks.

8. How Skilled Are You With the Tool in Question?

Simply reading about how best to use a tool is not the same as actually knowing how to do the job. Consider a situation where you feel that you know how to use a handsaw. Here are just a few things that you may overlook in a time of need. Aside from producing low quality, crooked cuts, some of these problems may actually lead to serious injury.

- Forgetting to wear goggles when using tools. No matter whether you are cutting, drilling, or shaping wood, metal, plastic, or some other substance, bits of the material will go all over the place. While much of the material may fall as dust at your feet, other bits can very easily get lodged in your eyes. You may at first feel that a bit of sawdust in the eye is a minor inconvenience, but it can scratch the cornea of the eye and leave you with permanent scars that reduce the clarity of your eyesight. If that scratch becomes infected, it can also lead to blindness. Tiny bits of metal can also scratch and do serious damage. If the pieces of metal are big enough, they may also be able to cut blood vessels on the outer portion of the eyeball or in the eyelid.
- Forgetting to wear a dust mask. If you thought the damage from sawdust or metal bits was bad for your eyes, then you may not realize that it is just as bad on your lungs. Remember that the working parts of your lungs are very fragile, tiny little sacks that allow the exchange of air between the lung tissue and blood vessels. Dust of any kind can ruin them and leave you with steadily decreasing breathing capacity. Though you may not feel it right away, constantly breathing in saw dust or any other type of dust is a true danger to your health.
- Failure to apply blades and cutting edges in the right

direction or angle. Many people feel that as long as the blade is cutting, they are doing things right. On the other hand, adjusting the angle will actually make the work go a lot faster and also prevent damage to the blade itself.

- Failure to use proper grips and fasteners. Have you ever tried to cut a stick or dowel by bracing it on your leg or the floor? If so, then you may already know that you are wasting a lot of motion and energy trying to keep the material from moving. Always take the time to secure items you are working with using a good quality vice or other fasteners as needed. This is also good practice if you decide to use power tools. Needless to say, if you slip with a hand saw or other hand tool, it can do some serious injury to your hands, arms, or any other body part that gets in the way. If you have the same kind of accident with a power tool, it may well amputate that appendage. In a crisis situation, either type of injury can also lead to a life threatening infection.

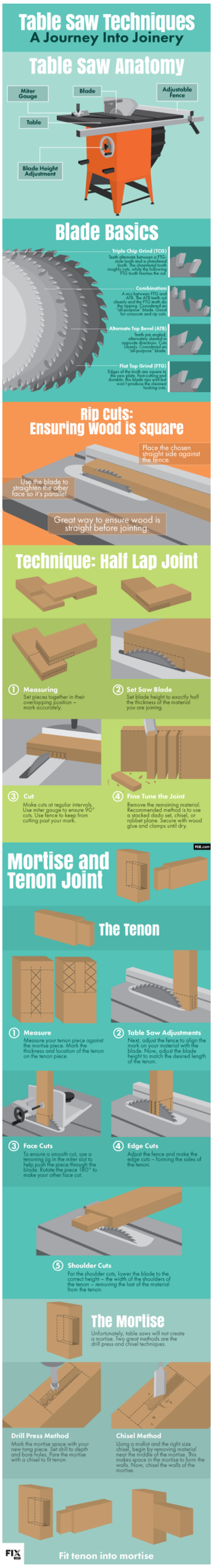

Table Saw Techniques
A Journey Into Joinery
Table Saw Anatomy
Miter Gauge
Blade
Adjustable Fence
Table
Blade Height Adjustment
Blade Basics
Triple Chip Grind (TCG)
Teeth alternate between a FTG-style tooth and a chamfered tooth. The chamfered tooth roughly cuts, while the following FTG tooth finishes the cut.
Combination
A mix between FTG and ATB. The ATB teeth cut cleanly and the FTG teeth do the ripping. Considered an "all-purpose" blade. Good for crosscuts and rip cuts.
Alternate Top Bevel (ATB)
Teeth are angled, alternately slanted in opposite directions. Cuts cleanly. Considered an "all-purpose" blade.
Flat Top Grind (FTG)
Edges of the tooth are square to the saw plate. Fast-cutting and durable, this blade rips well but won't produce the cleanest looking cuts.
Rip Cuts:
Ensuring Wood is Square
Place the chosen straight side against the fence.
Use the blade to straighten the other face so it's parallel.
Great way to ensure wood is straight before jointing.
Technique: Half Lap Joint
1 Measuring
Set pieces together in their overlapping position – mark accurately.
2 Set Saw Blade
Set blade height to exactly half the thickness of the material you are joining.
3 Cut
Make cuts at regular intervals. Use miter gauge to ensure 90° cuts. Use fence to keep from cutting past your mark.
4 Fine Tune the Joint
Remove the remaining material. Recommended method is to use a stacked dado set, chisel, or rabbet plane. Secure with wood glue and clamps until dry.
FIX.com
Mortise and Tenon Joint
The Tenon
1 Measure
Measure your tenon piece against the mortise piece. Mark the thickness and location of the tenon on the tenon piece.
2 Table Saw Adjustments
Next, adjust the fence to align the mark on your material with the blade. Now, adjust the blade height to match the desired length of the tenon.
3 Face Cuts
To ensure a smooth cut, use a tenoning jig in the miter slot to help push the piece through the blade. Rotate the piece 180° to make your other face cut.
4 Edge Cuts
Adjust the fence and make the edge cuts – forming the sides of the tenon.
5 Shoulder Cuts
For the shoulder cuts, lower the blade to the correct height – the width of the shoulders of the tenon – removing the last of the material from the tenon.
The Mortise
Unfortunately, table saws will not create a mortise. Two great methods are the drill press and chisel techniques.
Drill Press Method
Mark the mortise space with your new tang piece. Set drill to depth and bore holes. Pare the mortise with a chisel to fit tenon
Chisel Method
Using a mallot and the right size chisel, begin by removing material near the middle of the mortise. This makes space in the mortise to form the walls. Now, chisel the walls of the mortise.
FIX.com
Fit tenon into mortise

9. Can You Safely Use the Tool Now as Well as if You Are Injured or Disabled?

As time goes by, an aging body often loses the ability to do many things. For example, arthritis or other joint problems may make it harder to turn a screw driver, use a saw, or hammer nails.

Choose tools that will age with you and still be usable if you become disabled or injured. In this case, you should look for aftermarket grips or other accessories that will make the tool easier and safer to work with. Just make sure that you are as comfortable using these grips as you are a tool without these additional parts.

10. Can You Think of Projects and Ways to Use the Tool Now?

One of the best things you can do when assessing tools for survival needs is to use them now as much as possible. Choose a wide range of projects so that you can get plenty of practice as well as find out how durable the tool is. Here are some projects to use on the tools you plan to keep for survival needs:

- Build wooden toys with many moving parts. This will help you establish a good level of precision with everything from saws and chisels to screwdrivers and nails.
- Build cabinets, and then shelves that will need to accommodate fairly large amounts of weight.
- Build toys or other small items from metal. You can start off by building toys from tin cans. This will help you practice bending and cutting metal as well as learn how to gauge the strength of metals. When working with metal, always take extra care to wear gloves in order to protect your hands from sharp, thin bits that are bound to occur.
- Build a small shed or some other structure where you must assemble an inner frame and then add a roof, floor,

and sides. From there, you can also try building decks and ramps.

- Take apart an old lawnmower engine and rebuild it to working order. This will help you learn how to clean grimy parts and recognize those that are worn. You will also learn some important things about dissembling and re-assembling basic engines.
- Take apart an old motorcycle engine and put it back together. This will be an excellent place to learn how to make replacement parts if needed as well as repair and clean basic engine components.
- Try taking apart and re-assembling a car from bumper to bumper. While this may take a few years for the weekend hobbyist, it will truly be worth your effort.

As you can see, choosing tools is about far more than having a nice shiny set of sockets and saws hanging on the back wall of your work room. It is about having a small set of tools that you can rely on to help you get any job done and in any situation.

Take the time now to buy good quality tools and then practice with them as much as possible so that you will have both confidence and skill in a time of need.

This article has been written by ***Carmela Tyrell*** *for [Survivopedia](#).*