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TIPS FOR SELECTING HAND TOOLS

Choice is supposed to be a good thing – but not when a trip to the hardware store becomes a mind-boggling experience. No matter the tool, a few basic principles can help guide the selection process. Keep in mind, the ultimate hand tool is easy to use and enables you to work comfortably and efficiently. It helps you produce high-quality work without damage and provides useful features within your budget. Here are some qualities to look for when comparing hand tools of any type.

EASE OF USE AND COMFORT

Ergonomics

Many hand tools claim to be ergonomic, but only you can be the judge, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). A hand tool is ergonomic only when it fits the task you are performing and fits your hand without awkward postures, harmful pressures or other safety and health risks, says NIOSH. Truly ergonomic hand tools fit naturally in your hand, are lightweight, quiet, easy to hold and require minimal force. If a tool does not fit your hand or is used in a way that was not intended, it can cause damage over time, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis or muscle strain.

The Bionic Wrench™ fits virtually all hand sizes, has a comfort-grip handle and is small and lightweight -- features that make it safe for repetitive use. A downloadable brochure about ergonomics, including a checklist for selecting tools, is available from NIOSH at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh>.

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Universal Design

The idea of universal design is to develop products that can be used by everyone, to the greatest extent possible, regardless of age, ability or situation. Here are some principles of universal design that can be applied to hand-tool design:

- useable by people with diverse abilities
- flexible in use
- simple and intuitive
- requiring low physical effort

The Bionic Wrench™ meets all those universal design requirements. It can be used with both left and right hands and works in both forward and backward motion. The Bionic Wrench™ is easy for users of all abilities to produce results with minimal force.

PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFICIENCY

Easily Adjustable

Look for tools that will help you produce quality work efficiently -- for example, wrenches that do not require extra time for adjustment. A traditional adjustable wrench needs to be tightened every time it is removed and reattached, otherwise it will become loose and slip off the work.

Unlike traditional wrenches, the Bionic Wrench™ fully grips a wide range of nuts and bolts, whether metric or SAE, without need for adjustment. With a simple release of the grip and a re-grip, the Bionic Wrench™ has an efficient ratcheting action.

Non-Damaging

Good tools will not damage your work or produce inferior results. Again, traditional adjustable wrenches have a reputation for slipping and causing damage to nuts and bolts – not to mention your knuckles! The Bionic Wrench's™ patented grip will not slip off the work piece, and it can often remove nuts and bolts that were damaged by other wrenches. The Bionic Wrench's™ unique adjustable grip even fits on nuts and bolts that are painted or rusted.

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QUALITY AND VALUE

Construction

A quality wrench should last a lifetime. Look for precision-machined tools made of durable, high-quality materials, such as top-quality steel. A corrosion-resistant finish will make a tool last even longer. For example, the Bionic Wrench™ is made with hardened, cold-rolled, steel laminate and is coated with a black-oxide finish to prevent chipping and flaking, and to resist rust and corrosion.

Price and Lifetime Guarantee

What you spend for a tool depends on your needs, wants and budget. Some construction professionals rely on a few quality tools, while many mechanics have \$40,000 tool sets. Tool retailers are noticing more novices purchasing professional-grade tools and professionals using DIY-grade tools. No matter your budget, wants and needs, cheap knock-off tools are not a value because they do not last and may actually damage your work. A lifetime guarantee is a good indication of quality, and should be a consideration for often-used tools.

Multipurpose Tools

Large “value” sets are only a value if you truly need 200 different sockets or 1,000 tools. Consider multipurpose tools; if you can purchase one wrench to cover 14 to 18 sizes you will not only have more money to spend on other tools, but you will also have to make fewer trips to the tool box.

Made in USA

As competition in the market heats up, more tool companies are following the trend of moving production overseas. The United States has a strong reputation for manufacturing the highest quality hand tools. While some argue that foreign production methods are improving, it’s hard to deny that U.S. manufacturing supports our economy. If that is important to you, look for a “Made in the U.S.A” label on the packaging.

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STEADY GROWTH AHEAD

The hand-tool market is expected to grow steadily in the next 10 years, so prepare for more tools, features, innovative marketing strategies and retail outlets. Manufacturers are expected to offer more ergonomic and user-friendly features.

To avoid confusion, focus on quality and features that make the tool easy to use, enable you to work comfortably and efficiently, and help you produce high-quality results without damage. A quality tool that fits your needs should stand the test of time.

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