

**Leatherman Surge
multitool**

"Twenty-one tools in a neat little package. Just pop out a screwdriver to remove faceplates when painting walls or pliers to tighten bolts on furniture. It's so convenient having wire cutters, scissors, and more in the palm of your hand, too." —Kelly Carrell
TO BUY: \$110, leatherman.com.



**BUILD A BETTER
TOOL KIT**
Home-improvement pros share the nuts and bolts (and the levels and screwdrivers) of a super-handy set.

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THE GUIDE
home



Stanley InstantChange Knife

"A utility knife makes it so much easier to cut rigid plastic packaging, cardboard boxes, and even carpet. Most have blades that are difficult to change, but not this one—just push the button to release the blade and insert a new one."

—Marie Leonard
TO BUY: \$15, amazon.com.



Skill Cross-line laser level

"About \$30 less than long-distance levels (primarily used by contractors), this one is just right for basic household projects, like hanging pictures or shelves. It produces a stable line within five seconds. You can even mount it on a camera tripod instead of holding it."

—J.K.
TO BUY: \$69, lowes.com.



Hyde 5-in-1 painter's tool

"Invest in this one item and you don't need a small putty knife, a paint can opener, or paint scrapers, all of which take up precious tool-bag space. Not only does this angular tool cover those functions but it can also scrape away old caulk, loosen trim, and remove putty."

—M.L.
TO BUY: \$9, acehardware.com.



Klein Tools heavy-duty multibit screwdriver

"Instead of storing multiple screwdrivers, choose this one with six screw heads. Along with Klein's high-leverage side-cutting pliers, this tool can handle every kind of household task, from assembling furniture to hanging window treatments."

—Lou Manfredini
TO BUY: \$16, kleintools.com for info.



Bostich 16-ounce smooth straight-handle hammer

"Pick a hammer that feels good in your hand and is easy to swing. For many people, a 16-ounce head is way more manageable than a 20-ounce one. This hammer has an oversize striking face for improved accuracy, plus a slip-resistant handle for a secure grip."

—Jason Kyser
TO BUY: \$16, lowes.com.



Husky magnetic extendable pickup tool

"I'm always dropping nuts and bolts in hard-to-reach areas when repairing appliances or installing fixtures. With this tool, I can retrieve them by dangling the magnet over the spots where they fell. It doubles as a stud finder by magnetizing to the nailheads connecting the drywall to studs."

—Chris Zeisler
TO BUY: \$10, homedepot.com.



Bosch PS21 drill with 12-year lithium-ion battery

"This cordless drill has a trigger that makes it easy to switch speeds, depending on what you're drilling into—faster for wood shelves, slower for tougher pieces, like a metal storm door. The best part: Its battery stays charged for up to 18 months."

—M.L.
TO BUY: \$99, boschtools.com.



Stanley Powerlock measuring tape

"This is a basic one-inch-wide, 25-foot-long measuring tape, but I love its sturdy design. It extends to about six feet without bending, so you don't need a helper holding the other end."

—L.M.
TO BUY: \$13, amazon.com.



ERGONOMIC TOOL BAG

In a typical tool box, the contents lie jumbled in a big pile. This easy-to-transport knapsack has 23 pockets to store handled tools upright and neatly.

TO BUY: AWP HP ballistic-nylon zippered closed tool bag, \$40, lowes.com.

OUR EXPERTS

KELLY CARRELL, SuperHandyman newspaper columnist.

JASON KYSER, resident pro at Pro.com.

MARIE LEONARD, author of *Marie's Home Improvement Guide*.

LOU MANFREDINI, host of *HouseSmarts* and Ace Hardware's home expert.

CHRIS ZEISLER, appliance specialist at RepairClinic.com.

oddball extras

These three everyday items are surprisingly helpful for home-improvement tasks, too.

1 PAPER CLIPS

Their fine, pointy ends are perfect for cleaning out super-small spots, like dried paint caught in the crevices of a screw head.

2 PETROLEUM JELLY

This greasy lubricant works as a barrier to paint. Use it to coat the inside rim of a paint can, and the top will open easily for the next job. When spray-painting, rub some on your hands to keep them unstained.

3 RED LIPSTICK

A bright idea for hanging a mirror or a piece of art: Mark the hardware with lipstick, then press it against the wall to show where to nail. (To remove the lipstick marks later, wipe with a Magic Eraser.)



FIX-IT FAVORITES
Find more clever home-improvement helpers at realsimple.com/tools.