

UltimateSmallShop.com Presents

# THE WORKSHOP *Cheat List*

*How To Buy Lumber & Tools At Deep Discounts!*

PLUS  
**FREE**  
LUMBER  
SOURCES!



# THE WORKSHOP CHEAT LIST

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**How To Cut Enormous Costs On Wood,  
Tools and Woodworking Supplies**

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You will be surprised at how much you can save if you cut down costs of tools and supplies. When we say cut down costs we never imply compromising on quality.

These are some effective areas where you can cut down costs:

- Raw materials
- Tools
- Time & technique

Wood is your single largest cost in woodworking. If you are a hobbyist and your need for wood is not too high, you probably buy it at the local home store. Regardless of whether your demand is high or low, these are the ways to save money on wood.

- Find a lumberyard.
- Local Sawmills
- Shop online. ( This one may sound strange, but hear us out).
- Plan your purchase & shop on offers & discounts.
- Build a relationships with a local vendor.
- Substitute with high quality board & veneer.
- Free Lumber from stores

## Lumber Yards:

You will be surprised that the lumberyards & online retailers are willing to fulfill even small orders. You can get a lot of help at the lumberyard. Wood is already cut & stocked according to grade & size. It is here that you will find the maximum variety as well as the best price.

## Local Sawmills:

You can get lumber at local sawmills - save 80-95% of what you would pay at a lumber yard or big box store.

For someone making or 2 projects a year, probably will not work for them because the lumber must be stacked and stickered to air dry for 6-18 months. For a woodworker making things frequently they should check the local sawmills.

There are quite few saw mills within a 50 mile radius from where I live. I buy from the mill at 75% to 90% of store prices.

Sure it's rough sawn and wet, but planers are cheap and all one has to do is wait 6-8 months for the lumber to dry for indoor projects. For outdoor projects, I wait maybe 30 days.

Example: - A mid size mill mainly mills Red Cedar.

They have cutoffs varying 4"-6" wide X 1/2 to 3/4 thick X 24" long.  
They make up a nice bundle of approximately 170 boards.

I pay \$25 a bundle.

*Do the math.*

I buy Walnut, cedar, hickory, Red & White Oak, Sycamore, etc. and whatever else is milled & grown locally.

## Online Retailers:

Online retailers are very helpful too. You can simply ask for the specifications you are looking for & they will send it to you. They commonly take orders over the phone as well.

When the wood is delivered to your doorstep you can inspect it & on the rare occasion something is not what you ordered you can return it for a free exchange.

Ordering wood online & over the phone seems strange at first. But it can begin to workout very well very quickly. You can avail great discounts with this method of ordering & it soon becomes a convenient way of doing business.

## **Free Lumber From Stores:**

The big box home stores receive lumber and sheet goods banded together with 1.5" X 2" 40+" long.

They are "cauls" used to keep the lumber or plywood from have damaged edges from the steel strapping tape.

Look inside around the back door of the lumber section, they will be there every day. . Take all you want.

Look inside the back door where they stack these by the dozens in small dumpsters. Take all you want.

To them it is trash that someone would have to dispose of. I use them for all sorts of things: frames for cedar chests, just all kinds of stuff.

# Additional Tips To Consider:

## **Dumpster Dive**

Skids are a good source of free lumber. “Pallet wood can yield good finds. Yes, with a nail hole or two, but surprising species.” Kerry Marshall’s wine barrel chair is an example of how great stuff can be made from reclaimed wood

## **Don’t be a Wood Snob**

Pine and construction lumber (carefully chosen and dried) from a big box store are economical and can be used to build nice furniture.

## **Build a Network**

Use Facebook, Twitter, and email to let friends know you are on the market for unused wood. You’ll be surprised at what’s out there.



# Saving On Tools

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The first method of saving on tools is not to buy ones you do not require in the first place. Choosing the right woodcrafts to make & sell is a big step in this direction.

Power tools save time & effort & increase your productivity. They should be used wherever possible & viable, although they are definitely not a pre-requisite for starting out.

The thing is, there are some neat tricks you can use whenever you are in the market for some power tools.

## Online sales, discounts & discount vouchers in woodworking magazines.

However, it is still a very effective tip. You get some really big discounts on online.

So what you need to do is join the newsletter of all the major woodworking tool websites & opt-in to be notified whenever any promotions come up.

## Get Power Tools on Craigslist

It's local, there are no shipping costs and no sales tax. Plus everything is negotiable. If you're a good negotiator Craigslist should be your go to place for huge discounts on tools (especially power tools).

**Like-New Tools** – Look for tools that have barely been used. Tools where the owner bought it for a particular project and then didn't need it anymore. You can usually get a 20%-30% discount on these like-new tools.

**Industrial Tools** – Industrial power tools are crazy expensive. A lot of small businesses that are closing up shop will sell off their machinery at a HUGE discount. I'm talking 70% or more off! If you

can be patient and wait for the right sale you can usually outfit an entire workshop in one stop.

## Try Harbor Freight

If you haven't heard of Harbor Freight Tools it's time you did. Their slogan is "Quality tools at ridiculously low prices." The quality tool part is a bit questionable in my mind, but the ridiculously low prices statement is spot on.

You won't find heirloom quality tools. I affectionately refer to these as my "disposable" tools. I've bought some lemons here, but some have been absolutely amazing and they are all hugely discounted.

For example, I have owned two Multi-Tools. The first is a Makita which cost \$159 and the other is a Chicago Electric (Harbor Freight's brand) which cost \$9.99. The Makita is a little quieter and transfers less vibration through the handle, but they are both just as effective.

The Chicago Electric died after about 3 years and the Makita is still going strong, but at 16 times the cost of the bargain brand it will have to work for 51 years to make up the cost! Not exactly worth it.

Buy these tools for one-off jobs that you won't need on a daily basis. I'll also buy some of these cheap tools to test out how a particular tool works for a job before sinking money into the fancy brands.

## Ebay

A lot of times the selection on Craigslist is limited because it's only local folks, but Ebay has items all over the world for sale. Sure you will have to pay some shipping and the auction setup causes prices to get out of control sometimes, but you can still find many a deal on tools here.

I use Ebay for hard to find and vintage heirloom quality tools. I've bought several glazing point drivers on Ebay for \$15 when the new ones run about \$170.

The hard to find stuff is here. You just have to look around and be patient for the right tool at the right price.

## Get Free Tools

Who doesn't love free stuff? Well, Harbor Freight also has an ad flyer that has a free tool available every month. You can use as many of the coupons as you want too.

Join the Inside Track Club and you get even bigger discounts and more free tools. Tape measures, screwdrivers, hammers, etc. Basic hand tools are usually the free stuff, but a free tool is a free tool and if you are just getting started this is a great place to stock up or find Christmas gifts.

I've gotten a least a dozen tape measures and screw drivers to outfit my shop this way!

I don't get any commissions from Harbor Freight, in case you were wondering. I just use them and love saving the cash.

## Use Superior Accessories

Now this is a great way to get more out of your existing woodworking tools. It is also a cost effective technique to make cheaper consumer power tools give industrial grade results. By using high quality accessories like router bits, you can get better, faster & more accurate results.

Parts like router bits will wear out less and give you the finish of more expensive power tools as long as you use high quality ones even in your lesser power tools. High grade accessories make your tools last longer because they cut, grind & finish with a greater degree of ease, thereby putting lesser strain on your machinery.

## TIP On Refurbished VS Used Tools

I love to buy refurbished tools but I don't usually recommend second hand tools. I'll come to that in a minute.

Refurbished tools are pre-owned tools that have been restored to new like condition by the company selling it. This could be the original manufacturer, an online store or local hardware store that deals in refurbished tools. So look around & see where all you can find them. Many major online stores have a section for 'refurbished tools'. It won't be in your face but you need to find it.

Coming to 2nd hand tools, we don't recommend them in most circumstances. In most cases you don't know anything about the tool. You can't see any wear & tear that's not apparent to the naked eye. And that's the kind of wear & tear that counts. There is usually no guarantee on 2nd hand tools whereas the refurbished ones almost always come with one.

Second hand tools can be more trouble than they're worth. Here are a few times when buying a used tool is a bad idea.

**Batteries** – Batteries and battery powered tools are rarely a good idea to buy used. Batteries have a limited life and they generally become less reliable as the years progress. Lightly used ones might work well, but anything over 6-months old is generally a bad idea.

**Repaired or Rewired** – Think like buying a used car. If there has been a major wreck or it's a salvage title, you probably want to keep looking. The same is true of power tools. If they have been extensively repaired or rewired you can't always trust that the work was done properly. Stay away.

**Levels and Squares** – If I'm buying something that has to be dead on square or perfectly level I never trust used or discount tools. I want something that is guaranteed to be perfectly square and true and level. Your eye won't be able to tell if something is off, but when your projects come out misaligned you'll sure notice then.

So unless you know the history of the tool, do not purchase second hand. You do not know if the tool has previously been repaired. And in case it has you can be sure that it's life has been greatly shortened. Getting it repaired again will cost you more money & won't be worth the use you get from it.

# A shopping strategy: foundation before frills

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My approach wasn't about buying cheap tools. Buying on price alone often costs more in the long run when a cheap tool doesn't perform or fails and must be replaced with one that works. The trick is finding quality tools at an affordable price, and knowing how to make the most of them.

My strategy was to buy the most basic and versatile tools before adding specialized ones, no matter how low the price. This led me to start with a tablesaw, a thickness planer, and a router.



A working shop has three hearts.

Start woodworking with a tablesaw, a benchtop planer, and a plunge router, and you'll be equipped to perform a core set of vital milling, joinery, and shaping tasks. Plan on spending \$600 to \$1,200 for a used cabinet saw or new hybrid, \$400 for a planer, and \$200 for a plunge router or router combo kit.

Through my cabinet-shop connections, I managed a snappy deal (\$200) on a used cabinet saw with a 54-in. commercial rip fence. That price would be hard to match, but it is possible to find a hybrid or used cabinet saw with a high-quality fence for \$600 to \$1,200. Some of them will run on 120v household current, meaning you won't have to rewire your shop for 240v service, but be sure to check for compatibility before you buy.

## The tablesaw

This tool is the backbone of nearly every shop, and for good reason. It allows unmatched precision in ripping parallel edges and crosscutting at a variety of angles. Most woodworkers find it crucial for the basic milling of stock. It is also suited to many joinery tasks, easily producing tenons, box joints, and—with a reground blade—the tails for dovetail joints.

This style of saw will provide more power than a contractor-type saw and have the high-quality rip fence you need to do good work. However, because they are favored by professionals and serious amateurs, cabinet saws are harder to find on the used market. Scour the classifieds and online sales (be sure to check industrial auction sites as well), and do some networking.

Check the bulletin board at your hardwood supplier and ask the proprietors if they know of anyone selling a saw. Also call local cabinet shops. They sometimes have a surplus tool sitting idle that they'd be willing to sell. Take your time in this step. A careful investment will pay dividends in the long run, but a well-intentioned compromise can cause long-term frustration.

## **The thickness planer**

A thickness planer will significantly expand the creativity and craftsmanship of your work by allowing you to buy roughsawn stock and use wood of any thickness in your designs. Nowadays, a new planer often represents a better value than a used model. In recent years, DeWalt and Ridgid have introduced portable planers with chip-ejection fans, which work as a built-in dust collector.

Dust collection is important for all tools, but essential for thickness planers. This feature can help delay the expense of a dust collector and thus reduce the overall cost of a planer. Speaking of dust collection, I should mention that I don't use a dedicated dust collector in my shop. I use a shop vac with a small hose for my sanders and a larger-diameter hose for the tablesaw and router table, and I depend on the built-in chipjection fan for my thickness planer.

## The router

The router is the master when it comes to flexibility. Its potential far exceeds trimming and decorative edge treatments. A router will cut mortises, rabbets, and dadoes, and adding a router table builds in even more versatility, including biscuit joinery and raised-panel doors. But where the router distinguishes itself from all other tools is in its ability to produce identical parts using a pattern.

Other important power tools—A good jigsaw will help get you through many tasks, particularly cutting curves, that would otherwise require a bandsaw. Look for one with blade guides that keep blade deflection to a minimum. A handheld drill is also essential. A quality corded drill is much less expensive than a cordless one, and will never leave you without a charge. Also look for a quality random-orbit sander with a provision for dust collection.

One of the best deals on portable power tools, including routers and sometimes planers, comes in the form of factory-reconditioned tools. These are primarily tools that have been repaired at the factory after failing quality inspections or being returned by customers. While they cannot be sold as new, they are identical to new tools in quality and appearance and usually feature the same warranty (be sure to check).

Typical savings are anywhere from 15% to 30%, though you sometimes can find even bigger bargains. These tools can be found at Amazon.com and other online tool sellers. It is also possible to buy them through retail stores and, in some cases, directly from the manufacturer's Web site.

### **A few words about auctions**

For any auction, live or online, make sure you know the current retail price of tools like the one you are bidding on. Then set your price and stick to it.

Before you bid in an online auction, check the site's rules of operation. At some sites, a winning bid is a binding contract, which

can be a problem if you can't inspect the tool before you purchase it. Don't forget shipping costs. In some cases they can exceed the cost of the tool. Also, make sure the tool you're buying will run on the power you have in your shop.

Many former industrial tools run on 240v single-phase power. If your shop doesn't have 240v service, you'll need to factor in the cost of upgrading before deciding to buy. You don't want to saddle yourself with a tool you can't use, no matter how good the price.

# OTHER MISC TIPS TO SAVE ON TOOLS:

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## Buy Combo Kits

If you need to stock up your toolbox or replace a number of older piece, then those package deals that let you buy several tools at once really do pack in the savings. You might spend up to 30 percent less compared to buying each tool individually.

Combos can be an especially good deal in the era of cordless tools. "You can buy several tools, but you only need to purchase a single battery and charger, which is less expensive than buying a battery and charger for each one," says Jim Bohn, director of strategic development for Bosch.

For example: Lowe's has a Kobalt four- tool, 20-volt lithium-ion combination kit with two batteries, charger, drill/driver, impact driver, reciprocating saw, and work light for \$299. Buying each tool individually with a battery and charger would cost more than \$400.

The catch is that the combos often include stuff that you don't want or need, like a cheap work light, which are added to increase the number of items in the box.

Companies may also include a new tool that DIYers aren't familiar with in order to get exposure. "It's a great way for us to provide an incentive for them to try a new product," says Greg Palese, vice

president of marketing for Klein Tools. His company sometimes offers pliers and wire strippers in a combo pack. "Consumers might ask, 'Do I need this?' This way, they can try it for a value."

## **Stick With a Brand**

What goes for gadgets goes for tools, too: Once you're in a manufacturer's ecosystem, it's easier and cheaper to stay there than to have multiple products by multiple makers. This is especially true in the cordless tool age. You save money by buying only a single battery and charger, and stick that battery in whichever tool you're using. The Ryobi 18V One+ system, for example, has more than 50 tools that use the same battery platform, letting you power anything from a hammer drill to a weed trimmer to a drain auger with the same battery.

Once you buy in to a platform, you can buy "bare" tools without the battery and charger included, which saves cash. Since most tool users want the ultra-fast chargers, which are sometimes literally labeled "fast" chargers because they rejuvenate a battery in 40 minutes or less, the savings can be significant—up to \$50. If you currently have several brands of tools, pick your favorite and stick with it. You'll save cash and have fewer batteries and chargers eating up space on your workbench.

Brian Hobbs, vice president of sales and marketing for Techtronic Industries Power Equipment, says the other important thing for

buyers to do is look for lines that have backwards compatibility—meaning that the same battery can be used across old and new generations of tools. Hobbs says most toolmakers (though not all) will offer as much compatibility as possible—it would be foolish not to. "The reason we don't leave a customer behind is once they're in the system, it's easier to get them to stay in the system. Unless they're dissatisfied, they'll stay with it, and we want to give them the opportunity to save money."

## Use Loyalty Programs

Like airlines, some manufacturers have loyalty programs that reward those who continually buy from a brand. The programs are typically retail-agnostic, so buyers earn points regardless of whether they buy a product online or at the Home Depot. Klein Tools has a loyalty program, for example, that lets buyers provide proof of a sale via an app. Then buyers redeem points toward branded merchandise or other items, such as a BBQ grill. "A free t-shirt is better than nothing," Palese says. Other companies let tool buyers sign up as members to get special offers, exclusive promotions, or win new tools.



## Shop at the Right Time of Year

It's no surprise that tools are on sale leading up to Father's Day and Christmas. But you may not know just how aggressively the tools are discounted. "You can see 40 to 60 percent off in holiday sales from October onward, even in the pro lines," Bohn says, noting that the biggest discounts usually take place on Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

Specialty tools usually go on sale at other times of the year. Bohn says that indoor woodworking tools, for instance, are usually on sale in February and March, while people are still working indoors. So if you don't need a tool right away and can plan ahead to buy it later, wait for when the picking is ripe.

## Be Honest With Yourself About What You Need

We all know somebody whose garage is filled with top-of-the-line tools in pristine condition—because they're rarely used. But for weekend warriors and DIYers, it doesn't make sense to pay extra for tools with features you'll never use or for expensive tools that you'll use a couple times a year, especially when less expensive versions are available. The exception is when you need an upgrade to accomplish a certain task or you're a hobbyist, such as a woodworker, who will put a lot mileage on your tools.

"If you just need to fix something or put together a swing set, you don't need a pro-grade set for hundreds of dollars,"

"Think about the job you're doing. Sometimes you need more oomph and it makes sense to step up and look at a pro tool that will last longer and you won't need to replace."

## Still, Don't Cheap Out

While most homeowners don't need pro tools, they can also take home buyer's remorse when they opt for the lowest-priced models. "What performance are you expecting?" Bohn says. "People get frustrated when they buy a cheap tool, but like old saying goes, you get what you pay for." Likewise, a low-priced version of even a brand name tool will not have the same features, durability, or performance as the same company's higher priced models.

It's a bit like buying a TV, then. It's probably a bad idea to buy the cheapest one.

I hope this guide helps you out in any way!