

Tools – a basic starter set

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Good woodworking tools are expensive. When one is starting out, naturally, one doesn't want to buy tools that won't last or not be used. Fortunately, in our throw-away society, it is pleasing to know that good tools will last you a lifetime. They are an investment, so it makes sense to buy the right ones the first time.

Obviously, the tools you will need will depend on what you want to make and your level of skill, so there is no definitive list of must-have tools.

Here is a list compiled by John Brown (1932 to 2008), the now-deceased Welsh chair-maker who became well-known for his hand-made Windsor-style chairs. John Brown was a purist who did most of his work by hand. He wrote a book on making Welsh Stick Chairs, in which he records how he left the boat building trade when they moved from wood to fibreglass. He bought a house in rural Pembrokeshire, South Wales in 1975, which did not even have electricity. He worked alone in a small workshop, and despite doing all his work by hand, he made a living this way. This was rare at the time and even rarer now. Up until the time he wrote his book in 1990, he had made 400 chairs, and continued, probably till his death in 2008.

Here is a list of hand tools he considered essential for cabinet making, possibly with a bias towards chair making.

It was published in his column in **Good Woodworking** in the autumn of 1997, so some of the tools may not be available now. The picture of the tools below is from the article, and was scanned in, so the quality is not very good.



Saws:

26" Rip Saw, 22" Crosscut
Panel saw
8" Gents saw – Roberts & Lee;
Coping saw; 12" Turning saw
– also called a frame saw;
Junior hack-saw – Eclipse
8" regular taper saw file; 6"
slim taper saw file – for
sharpening the saws.

Hammers:

20 oz Claw – Stanley 40
series; 12 oz Cross-pein;

Planes:

Jointer No 7; Jack No 5;
Smoothing No 4; Block 60½
(12.5 degree angle blade)
Stanley Bailey or Record.
Rebate No 778 – Record (Or a
Stanley 12-078); Router No
71 – Stanley
Kunz adjustable mouth spoke-
shave, similar to Stanley No 53

Chisels:



1¼" paring; ½" paring; 1" register (mortise); ½" register (mortise)
¼" bevel edge. Record Marples, Stanley, Footprint, etc.

Boring holes:

10" Brace – Stanley 73 Mk iv;
Hand drill – Stanley
1"; ¾"; 5/8"; ½"; 3/8" Jennings bits; 1¼" Centre pattern bit (all to go in the brace) + Bit Roll – 9
pocket to hold the bits
13 piece twist drills set, Countersink bit

Measuring and Marking:

3" Rabone Blind Man's Rule; 5 m tape; 12" Try Square; 10 ½"; Sliding Bevel;
Mortise gauge; Cutting gauge
Knife (Sloyd) 120SB; 2" Bradawl – square blade; Stanley Knife #199
36" or 48" straight edge

Miscellaneous:

8" Screwdriver ; 4" Screwdriver
6" Pliers; 10 " Pincers
12" Wood rasp
Cabinet Scraper
Burnisher – such as a Kirschen for putting an edge on the cabinet scraper. (The shaft of a
good screw driver will do in a pinch.)

Sharpening:

Hand grinder
Fine bench stone – 8" x 2" Norton India; Slip stones

Holding and Cramping (Clamping):

Vice – Wood - Record 10 ½" plain screw
Vice – Mechanics – Record 4 "
G Cramps – 120mm – 4 off
Sash Cramps – 2 x 36" and 2 x 72"

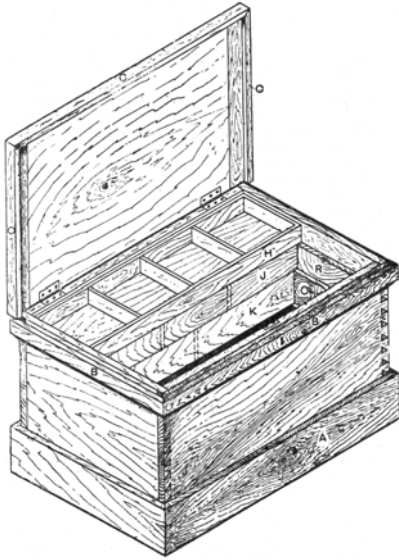
Pencils, chalk, masking tape, rags, brushes, Danish oil, paint, glue.

There are a few items that I think could be added as you can afford them:

- Some safety gear – glasses, hearing defenders (for use with the router), disposable dust masks and leather gloves. The gloves help to keep splinters at bay.
- Perhaps a small mallet for use with the mortising chisels.
- Notice no mention of sand paper above – I would add some 220 grit fine cabinet paper.
- Nowadays instead of the hand-turned grinder, I would suggest a small 6", two wheel bench grinder, 1400 rpm if available, although most are 2800 rpm, with an O'Donnell Grinding jig – or similar
- I would suggest replacing the hand drill with a cordless drill driver, which I believe will give you better results, as you can concentrate on lining up the drill and not worry about turning it.
- A jig-saw with wood cutting blades can save a lot of time, particularly when dealing with sheet goods. Look at the Skil jig saw for low vibration.
- After the jig-saw, I would look at getting a router. With jigs, these are very versatile and can save a lot of handwork.
- Modern hard-point hand saws need less sharpening, but you will need to buy a diamond file as the hard teeth will ruin your ordinary saw files.
- Straight edge – 450 or 600 mm long – useful for checking out the flatness of panels – use a high quality rule as a substitute. A large framing square can also be useful, although check it is actually square – I had to "adjust" mine with a hammer as it was about a millimetre out.
- The planes are expensive if bought new, and may still require some fettling. Look for good, second-hand ones. If you can't afford them all at once, start with the No5.



- The sash clamps are also quite an investment. A couple of ratchet tie-down straps can serve as a substitute. We also have some clamps at the club house that you can use.



With these tools, you should be able to make most things wooden. Heavy machining work can be done on the table saw, band saw, radial-arm saw, jointer and thicknesser at the club house.

Perhaps one your first projects could be a tool chest or cabinet to keep your tools in? What are you waiting for?

Picture of John Brown from
<http://www.getwoodworking.com/news/article.asp?a=940>
Drawings of Tool Chest and Tool Cabinet from The Handyman's Book by Paul Hasluck first printed in 1903 and reprinted by Ten Speed Press