

20 Cool Tools for \$20 or Less

"In a pinch, you can use it to swat bees or flip pancakes, but this inexpensive pull saw excels at cutting straight, fast, and flush."

Charles Bickford, senior editor

This \$20 **Double Cut Saw** from **Irwin** has crosscut teeth on one side and rip teeth on the other. It cuts a fast, thin kerf perfect for flush cuts, finishing stopped cuts, or just working quietly. The blades are too complex to resharpen, but they are removable and can be replaced when they become dull.

www.irwin.com

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"On most of the old houses I've worked on, odd angles are the rule, not the exception."

Daniel Morrison, assistant editor

Instead of measuring an odd angle, simply transfer it to your workpiece or saw with **Stanley's Solid Hardwood T-bevel**. With a hardwood handle, a rust-resistant steel blade, and a brass end cap, this \$11 tool can stand up to the rigors of home building.

www.stanleytools.com

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Some are time-tested.

Others are innovative.

All are good and cheap.

Check out the low-cost, high-value tools that we can't do without.

"I manage to drive a lot of drywall screws without hanging any drywall. This drill-and-drive kit gives me a quick way to drill countersunk pilot holes, and then drive screws."

Tim Snyder, executive editor

There are plenty of these kits available, but **DeWalt's 8-Piece Drill Drive Set** handles most jobs. The kit costs \$20 and comes in a compact, crush-proof case.

www.dewalt.com

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MORE COOL TOOLS ▶



4 "I used to put the death grip on miters before shooting a nail to lock them. These clamps changed my life by making it easy to preassemble moldings."

Gary M. Katz, contributing editor

Collins Miter Clamps are strong enough and sharp enough to hold even the fussiest miter joints. A four-pack of clamps costs \$11.50. Add a pair of miter-clamp pliers for \$14.99, and the clamps become even easier to use.

www.collinstool.com



5 "If I'd charged a nickel per sharpening, the rest of the crew would have paid for my pencil sharpener in a week."

Roe A. Osborn, senior editor

Putting a point on a pencil with a utility knife can be an exercise in frustration. **Boston's Battery-Operated Pencil Sharpener** costs \$10 and makes it easy to draw crisp, accurate cutlines.

www.wbmason.com



6 "These plastic squares are cheap, they're easy to find on a messy workbench, and they don't go out of square when you drop them."

Tim Snyder, executive editor

You can use **Empire's Poly-squares** to lay out angles, guide a circular saw for a straight cut, or simply check for square. Buy a 7-in. square for less than \$2 and a 12-in. square for less than \$7.

www.empirelevel.com



7 "Three screwdrivers are packed into the handle of this multitool, along with a knife, a saw, a wire stripper, and—for the end of the day—a bottle opener."

Tim Snyder, executive editor

At \$19, the **Schrade Tough Grip** is a lot less expensive than most other multitools, and it has one thing that competitive models don't: Vise-Grip long-nose pliers.

www.schradeknives.com



"Here's an abrasive companion that anyone can appreciate."

Chris Green, assistant editor

One side of the **4-in-Hand** is flat; the other is curved. You get two files and two rasps, everything you need to shape or file wood or metal for \$14.

www.tools-plus.com

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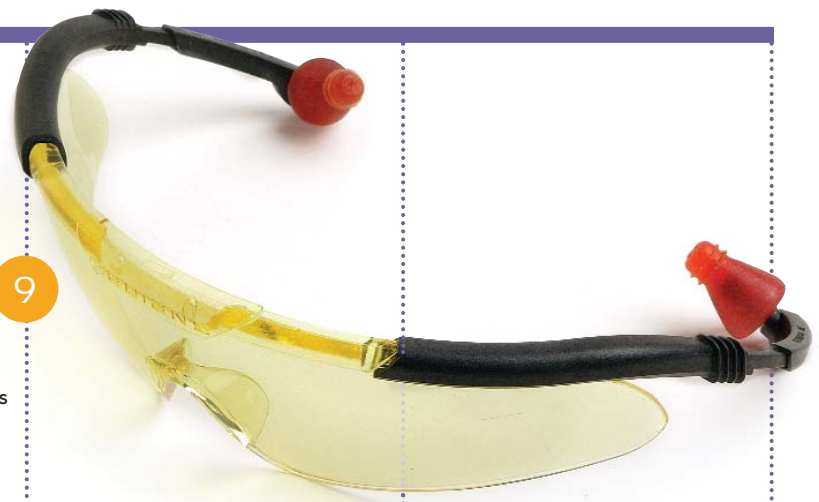
"Finally, there's a contraption cool enough to persuade me to wear both earplugs and safety glasses."

Daniel Morrison, assistant editor

Adding foam earplugs at the ends of the arms was a stroke of genius. **Radians Safety Glasses with Ear Plugs** cost \$14 and come with clear or tinted lenses.

www.radians.com

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"If it weren't for the sharp blade, I might have put this tool in my 4-year-old son's toolbox instead of mine. This small plane is perfect for fine-tuning miters."

Brian Pontolilo, assistant editor

The **Kuntz Palm Plane** fits in your pocket, feels good in your hand, and does a fine job of shaving joints, cedar shingles, and even vinyl siding for better fits—all for \$16.50.

www.leevalley.com



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"I really like the idea of a utility knife I don't have to unscrew with my fingernail."

Justin Fink, editorial assistant

Blue Point's Auto-Loading Knife offers easy access to blade storage, a comfortable grip, and a speedy, ingenious way to replace a dull blade with a sharp one. At \$17, it's a better deal than a manicure.

www.snapon.com



"My favorite compass for scribing is made by General. It is compact, durable, and almost free."

Roe A. Osborn, senior editor

Easily found for less than \$5, a **Pencil Compass/Scriber** makes easy work of marking casings, moldings, and even countertops to fit against out-of-square or bowed walls. When a circle is called for, the scribes turn into a compass. And these babies work great for splitting irregular angles.

www.generaltools.com

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MORE COOL TOOLS ▶

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"Nostalgic, maybe, but a folding rule is a lot better than curling your tape measure into a corner and guessing."

Kevin Ireton, editor

Lufkin's Wood Rule Red End with 6-in. Slide-Rule Extension costs \$15 and makes it easy to take exact inside measurements, say for a stair tread between skirtboards or for a closet shelf.

www.cooperhandtools.com



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"The only problem with stair gauges is remembering where you put them."

Roe A. Osborn, senior editor

Clamped on a framing square, these \$5 Stair Gauges make easy work of laying out stairs or rafters. You also can put both stops on one side of a square to give you a line parallel to the edge of a board.

www.stanleytools.com



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"I own a torpedo level because it fits in my tool pouch and is accurate. But don't assume that all small levels are created equal; get the Stabila."

Chris Green, assistant editor

The 10-in. Stabila Torpedo Level can be used on its own or teamed up with a straightedge to do the work of a longer level. One side of the level is edged with a magnet, and the vials are guaranteed for life not to break, leak, or need adjustment. Impressive for a \$20 tool.

www.stabila.com

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"It's not heavy enough to yank out 16d sinkers, but this small pry bar is ideal for pulling smaller nails and removing trim pieces without damaging the surrounding wood."

Scott Gibson, contributing editor

The 8-in.-long Tiger Claw has a pry bar on one side and a nail puller on the other. When the job calls for pulling or prying with finesse, this \$14 tool gets it done.

www.japanwoodworker.com

"I've played with a lot of checkout-line screwdrivers, but this is the first one I actually bought."

Sean Groom,
associate editor

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Inside the handle of **Cully's Mega-Pro 15-in-1**, you'll find more screwdriver tips than you'll ever need. At only \$19, you can afford to own a few tips that you'll never use.

www.duluthtrading.com



"A sharp addition to any chalkline, this industrial-strength pushpin allows you to snap a line without asking for help or leaving a big nail hole."

Mike Guertin,
contributing editor

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The **Rocket Anchor** is designed to capture the metal clip at the end of your chalkline. A hardened pin then can be driven into wood or masonry to anchor the line. When not in use, the \$18 tool clips to your chalkbox.

www.rocketanchor.com



"I used to yell for my wife every time I was working on a project and needed a second set of hands. Then I invested in a set of these clamps, and life got better for both of us."

Brian Pontolilo,
assistant editor

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With triggerlike tightening action, a quick-release lever, and cushioned glueproof pads, **Irwin's Quick-Grip Clamps** offer strength, reliability, and speedy operation; that's plenty of value for something that's well worth \$20.

www.irwin.com



"Who cares what the original five uses were. With this tool, 5-in-1 is an understatement."

Tom O'Brien, contributing editor

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Allway's version of this popular painter's tool is called an **8-in-1**. Use it to scrape paint or joint compound, excavate rotten wood, pry off trim, or clean a paint roller. At \$10, the 8-in-1 is more expensive than the competition, but it includes a teardrop-shaped hole for pulling small nails and a stowaway slot for a screwdriver tip that mounts in the handle end.

www.allwaytools.com



What's your
favorite tool for
less than \$20?

Go to
www.finehomebuilding.com
to cast your vote.