Maximize the Potential of Your Power Tools

Maximize Use of Your Power Tools with Accessories

By Gary Godek and Edward Veome

The best-kept secret about power tools is the dazzling array of different jobs they will perform when equipped with the right accessories.

Using accessories both maximizes the potential of power tools and enables professionals to become more productive in their work.

Before picking up any power tool, though, the basic requirement is to plan the work first. What materials will the operator be working with and what is the job to be done? It all starts there.

This article tells some of the ways professionals and others can maximize use of their power tools with accessories.

Routers

One of the most versatile power tools, likely offering the most number of accessories, is the router. Routers have a variety of applications including edge-forming, grooving, trimming or straight cutting. To illustrate the number of accessories available, Bosch, for example, produces more than 300 different router bit styles in carbide-tipped, solid carbide and high-speed steel units.

Let's look at just a few of the different applications. A router equipped with the A-line router bit system enables the operator to join two smaller pieces of wood together to make a larger piece.

Router bits also can be used to cut interlocking joints in woodwork and furniture, and most can be used to cut decorative edges.

The appropriate router bit also enables workers to do practical as well as decorative work, such as rounding off the sharp edge of a table being built with a roundover bit.

With in-depth knowledge of accessories, craftsmen can utilize routers for numerous tasks in a home. The hinge mortising bit, for example, enables the operator to put hinges in flush with the door frame when a door is being hung. The use of a keyhole router bit enables the user to cut a rounded indentation in the back of a picture frame so that the picture can be hung without attaching a loop of wire to hold it in place.

Router usage doesn’t stop there.

There is a whole family of bits that makes the router an all-purpose tool for kitchen and bathroom remodeling. These accessories are for use in work on a solid surface material such as the Corian used for kitchen and bath countertops.

Included are a roundover bowl bit, ogee bowl bit, no-drip bowl bit, inlay bit and bevel bowl bit, all used in various ways to install sinks, wash basins and shape countertops.

The proper router accessories permit work in acrylic, plastic and plexiglass as well. One very useful accessory is the router table.

The router can be inverted and mounted under the table, letting the
operator guide the work by hand and do intricate cutting and edging.

Sanders
Thanks to accessories, power sanders, too, have multi-faceted uses to perform a variety of sanding and polishing tasks. For instance, contrary to what some may believe, sanders do not have to be hand held. Through the use of the sander stand accessory, operators can take the work to the sander. Using the stand, the inverted sander can be clamped onto the work bench. That enables professionals to get more use out of the tool by using their hands to control the amount of feed, getting the “feel” of the sanding or polishing job.

Jigsaws
With a jigsaw, the diversity of blades available and the many tasks it can handle can make the unit a real jack-of-all-trades. The foremost consideration is to use the proper blade, matching the blade to the work. The guideline is TPI, or teeth per inch.

The more teeth per inch, the smoother but slower the cut. The fewer teeth per inch, the faster but less smooth the cut.

For cutting substances other than wood (ceramics, tile or marble), a carbide grit blade accessory is used. It cuts by means of grit rather than teeth. Another jigsaw accessory, the scroll blade, permits intricate cutting such as puzzle cuts.

A variable speed jigsaw is recommended because it permits operators to match the power to the type of work, preventing heat buildup the enemy of power tools and power tool accessories.

Drills
In the area of power drills, a variety of drill bits offer capabilities for drilling all types of holes: small or wide, deep or shallow, round or oblong-shaped.
a starting point for working in wood, but more special-
ized units, like those that are titanium-coated for added
toughness and long life, are more suitable for drilling in
metal. Carbide-tipped multipurpose bits can be used for
standard wood drilling or tougher applications such as
tile, brick or masonry.

A Forstner bit enables the craftsman to drill through
wood or leave a flat-bottomed hole and is used mainly
to drill larger holes. A brad point drill is used for very
precise drilling in soft wood.

A point in the center of the bit and two points on the
outer surface guide the drill so it does not wander.

Heavy-duty speed core self-feeding bits are designed
to drill holes in PVC, plumbing pipe, or conduit. There
are also screwdriver bits that are not used for drilling
holes but for applications where high torque is desired,
such as deck building.

The important thing to remember is that craftsmen
can put a good quality accessory on a less expensive
tool and still do a satisfactory job, but the reverse is not
true. For that reason, it is advisable to buy the best qual-
ity accessories that the individual can afford. CD

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