

# The Cordless Drill

By far the must have tool for any home improvement junkie is the Cordless Drill. This is the tool of the hour when trying to install shelves, drapery rods, valances, almost anything that needs a screw driven or a hole drilled, the cordless drill is the first tool that you should purchase that isn't a hand tool, this is all about have power at your finger tips.



When I purchased my first cordless drill, which by the way I think Shari may still have in her tool box, the choices were very slim. And as far as power, the highest voltage that was available was 9.6 volts. In cordless drill terms, the higher the voltage the more torque or power the drill has. The higher the voltage or power the better chance of driving a screw or drilling a hole in harder material.

Now the range of voltage is from about 6 volts which is perfect for smaller home improvement projects to an impressive 18 volts that is enough power to use on big jobs, from installing cabinets to framing out a house.

The trade off of course is how heavy the drill will become with a bigger battery. My first drill that was 9.6 volts weighed about 3 lbs. Newer, 18 volt models can weigh up to 10 lbs and that is a lot of heft to haul around if you are installing simple bookcases. So really have an idea of the type of power you will require (volts) as well as the type of job you are working on (house building or décor projects).



The handle of my first drill that I mentioned above was a pistol type grip, with the handle behind the motor forming a shape of a six shooter.



Newer models have a T-handle, the handle is below the motor while at the end of the handle is a battery compartment. With the battery centered under the weight of the motor, the T-handle is well balanced and easier to control. I use both types, first because I'm frugal and hate getting rid of tools, but also the piston grip handle can reach in hard to fit areas because the big battery pack of the T-handle can get in the way.

The major difference between an electric drill (one you plug in) and a cordless drill, (besides the obvious cord running out the back), is that a cordless drill has a clutch. The clutch is located behind the chuck which is where screwdriver bit and drill bits are placed. The clutch disengages the drive shaft of the drill. When a pre-set resistance is selected a clicking sound will occur when the resistance is met. The motor is still turning but the screwdriver bit isn't. What this does is to stop the cordless drill from stripping a screw or overdrive it once it is firmly snug.



So if you are setting a small screw, set the clutch at a lower number for a larger screw a higher number, and as Shari says Viola, no more stripped screws. The number of clutch settings varies by drill, if this is important to you; look for a drill that has numerous settings, the most being 24 on higher end drills.



Most clutches also have a drill setting, which allows the motor to drive the drill bit at full power.

As with all things fun, speed is important, cheaper models usually only have one speed. Higher end models have two fixed speeds (300 rpm to 800 rpm). A simple trigger on the top or side of the gun lets you select low or high speed. The low speed is for driving screws the higher speed is for drilling holes.



A variable speed drill is really cool especially if you are doing a lot of fancy carpentry, a variable speed can be controlled from 0 rpm to top end speed with a press of the trigger.

**W**hen purchasing a cordless drill of course the battery is a big concern. When I purchased my first cordless drill it had a nickel-cadmium (NiCad) battery (and charger of course), and only one in the drill. To say the least it held a charge for only a short time and since I only had one battery, I stood around waiting for the battery to charge or pulled out my electric drill and found the nearest plug.



Now with the new age of batteries and the Nickel-metal-hydride (NiMH) batteries, your cordless drill will run longer and is even smaller, making the battery pack on the drill handle smaller as well. They are also easier to dispose of, the old NiCad batteries contained cadmium which is toxic and should not be thrown away (all batteries should be recycled). It should be easy to find a drill that has NiMH batteries as most manufacturers make this type of drill and battery.

I mentioned above that my first drill only had one battery. Now most cordless drill kits come with 2 batteries included. If the drill you are considering purchasing doesn't come with two batteries, think twice, it is almost a necessity to have two batteries. Most of



the chargers have a fast charge or a slow charge; even though the fast charge may sometimes come in handy, opt for slow charging especially since you should have two batteries. The battery on fast charge can generate a lot of heat which can damage the battery. If you really need a fast charge, look for models that have “smart charge”, these chargers have sensors that read temperatures and protect from overheating.

When you are considering purchasing a drill try to consider the project or job you will be using the drill for. For Shari when she is using her drill for more light duty jobs like hanging drapery rods or installing shelves a smaller light weight cordless drill would work best. Look at a drill with 6 volts to 7.2 volts. It should have two speeds and the handle will usually be a pistol grip type. Light weight and not too bulky is the ticket here. I really suggest that you purchase extra batteries, but that is just me, even for smaller jobs, one should be charging while the other one is on the job. A drill in this range should start around \$30 to \$60 bucks.



Now for me, I do a lot more carpentry type jobs with my cordless drill. A 9.6 volt to a 12 volt drill is the ticket for me. These drills usually have more power, variable speeds and a clutch, and the T-handle shape. The ticket price for a drill in this range will be about \$60 to \$140.

Like any tool purchase you need to go out for a test drive. Visit a local home center store or hardware store and look over all the models and actually lift and test out the drill. Some stores offer demos and classes on tools, so take advantage of that to really test out the drill before purchasing. If you are near a job site where there are contractors working, ask them what

type of drill they prefer, if they are like me, they have tried them all, from small cordless drills to the big muscle types.

Then do your price checking and see what you can afford for the type of drill you want and need.

The cordless drill is by far is the one tool I would not be without, when we were taping “room by room”, we purchased drills for everyone that worked for us faster then they could say thanks for watching. It is the tool that should be in your tool bucket, so what are you waiting for Chuck, go buy one now, don’t be a clutch!



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