

What's in Your Toolbox?

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It's been said that you can pretty much disassemble a Miata with basic hand tools. I wouldn't doubt it really, though you might need a hoist (or a really BIG friend) for the engine and gearbox! Those basic hand tools will cover most any project or maintenance you might need to do. So what kinds of tools do you need in your toolbox to do this stuff we keep talking about here each month? Where do you start in order to build up the tools you might need to play with your Miata?

The cardinal rule of tools in the garage is: You can never have too many tools! You can find evidence of this by looking in my Dad's garage. Occasionally, you'll need some specific or specialized tool to do a job and there'll always be something out there that will make your job easier. But for the most part, you can't beat the basics. So here's my list of must-haves and nice-to-haves. Your list or thoughts may vary, but these should get you through most anything you need to do on the Miata.

The Must-Haves

- Screwdrivers – A good selection of small, medium and large, both flat and phillips head
- Wrenches – 8mm thru 17mm metric combination wrenches, preferably 6-point
- Pliers – Slip joint, linesman, diagonal, needle-nosed and arc-joint (aka Channel Locks)
- Crescent Wrenches – Small and large
- 1/4" Ratchet & Sockets – 6mm thru 12mm or so
- 3/8" Ratchet & Sockets – 10/12/14/17mm
- 1/2" Ratchet & Sockets – 10/12/14/17/19/21mm 23/24mm needed for gear oil changes
- Extensions & universals – Get a few sizes for each ratchet size you have
- Breaker Bar – 1/2" drive for when you need that extra bit of leverage, get a 3/8" adapter too
- Hammers – A large dead blow and ball-peen should do
- Cutters – Snips, shop scissors and a utility knife
- Protection – Safety glasses, mechanics gloves and ear muffs or plugs
- Tape/Adhesives/Goop – Duct tape (duh!), anti-seize, penetrating oil
- Jack & Jack Stands – Don't skimp here, use a floor jack, stands and a wheel chock

The Nice-To-Haves

- Picks – So handy, they're almost a must-have!
- Prybars – Quit using your screwdrivers for this! Get a couple of different sizes...
- Vice-Grips – Holds things together, but use a wrench or a socket to turn things, OK?
- Drill & Drill Bits – Never know when you need to make a hole
- Files & Rasps – For when you need to make a hole bigger
- Torque Wrench – Handy for wheels and most everything else, a 1/2 drive should do
- Ratcheting Wrenches – Handy in a tight spot
- Air Compressor – Makes life LOTS easier
- Lifts, Welders and More – There's always more tools to get! :O)

Remember our cardinal rule? The other two are that good tools last and that there's nothing like having the right tool for the job. So where do you get this stuff? The high-end stuff can be found at Snap-On, Matco and the other tool trucks. Sears Craftsman is decent stuff and easy to find. I've found that Stanley is making some pretty nice hand tools these days as well. And yes, some of my tools even came from Harbor Freight (HF). They're OK for stuff you don't use too hard or

don't mind replacing once in a while. For what it's worth, I've broken a few HF sockets, but I've broken a few Craftsman tools too.

Used tools can often be a good value, check the garage sales and flea markets. Even e-bay features used tools. It can be a great way to pick up a few odds and ends, or piece together a set of better quality tools without paying the higher price.

I've probably left a few good suggestions out of those two lists, let me know if you have any other must-haves of your own! Be sure to use the correct tool for the job. Remember to be careful, use proper protection, raise the car securely, use the right tool and take your time.

Now, the fine print: NOT responsible for accidents. Measure twice, cut once. The ideas and instructions stated above are not entirely original and are provided for your information and convenience. Use at your own risk. Your results may vary. Contents may settle during shipment. See dealer for details.