

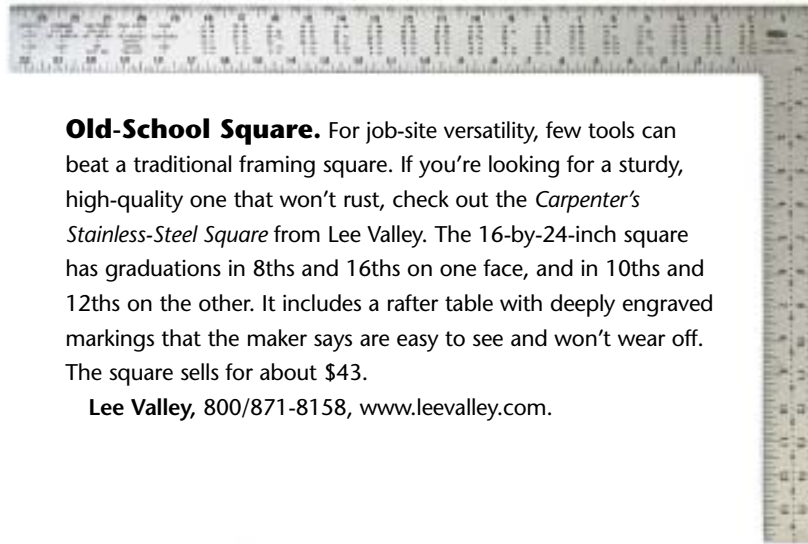
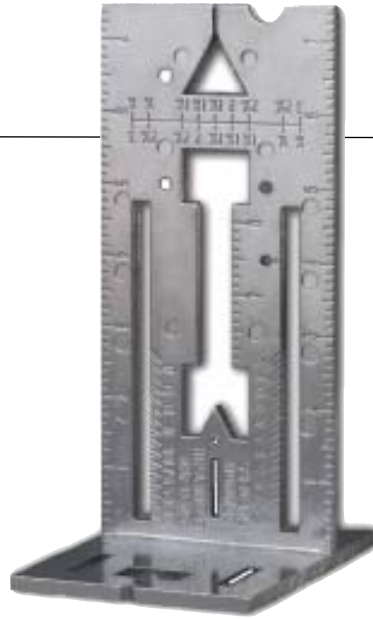
# Toolbox

by Patrick McCombe

## FRAMING TOOLS

**Layout Multitool.** Do-it-all tools rarely prove to be as useful as their manufacturers claim, but this may be one of the exceptions. The *Universal Square* from D-Unique is meant to replace your conventional rafter square, but it also helps with other common framing tasks. Because it's 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inches wide, you can use it to mark intersecting walls during layout and you can tack it down for holding the end of your tape when you're making solo measurements. It even helps mark anchor-bolt locations. The square sells for \$13.

**D-Unique Tools**, 510/569-9961, [www.universalsquare.com](http://www.universalsquare.com).



**Old-School Square.** For job-site versatility, few tools can beat a traditional framing square. If you're looking for a sturdy, high-quality one that won't rust, check out the *Carpenter's Stainless-Steel Square* from Lee Valley. The 16-by-24-inch square has graduations in 8ths and 16ths on one face, and in 10ths and 12ths on the other. It includes a rafter table with deeply engraved markings that the maker says are easy to see and won't wear off. The square sells for about \$43.

**Lee Valley**, 800/871-8158, [www.leevalley.com](http://www.leevalley.com).

**A Friend To Lean On.** Straightening walls is a critical step in any framing project. While most carpenters use wood bracing and kickers to pull wavy walls in line, metal bracing can be a faster and easier method. Qual Craft's *2620 Wall Brace* is made from powder-coated steel and adjusts from 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> to 11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> feet. But the best part is that you can tweak the wall with the brace nailed in position. A pair sells for about \$50.

**Qual Craft**, 781/344-1000, [www.qualcraft.com](http://www.qualcraft.com).



**FRAMING TOOLS**

**Corrective Measures.** I know I should be focusing on framing tools here — not demo tools — but sometimes framers make mistakes and sometimes customers and architects change their minds. In these instances, you need a tool to get things back on track right away, and the lightweight *Titanium Crowbar* from DutchGuard fits the bill. Besides looking cooler than a steel wrecking bar, the titanium bar is stronger and about 40 percent lighter, says the manufacturer. It's 28 inches long and sells for \$78.

**DutchGuard**, 800/821-5157, [www.dutchguard.com](http://www.dutchguard.com).



J. MARLIN PRODUCTIONS



**Tow-Behind Panel Producer.** Taking a cue from the modular building industry, framer Tim Fleeman has designed and engineered a tool that he says can cut framing time in half. The *Portaframer* is a tow-behind trailer that supports and lays out stud walls up to 10 feet high and 16 feet long. Steel pins maintain 16-inch spacing and air-actuated cylinders hold everything in position for nailing. Ball-bearing rollers allow you to remove wall panels from the assembly table without strain. (In addition to speeding production, the waist-high table makes framing a little easier on your back.) According to the maker, the *Portaframer* sets up in five minutes and greatly reduces your need for skilled help. It sells for \$13,200, shipping not included.

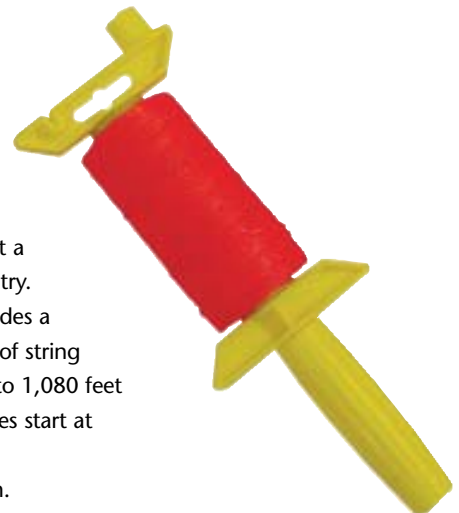
**Portaframer**, 573/576-6014, [www.portaframer.com](http://www.portaframer.com).

J. MARLIN PRODUCTIONS



**String Manager.** Fighting with a string line is not a good way to start a framing project. To get a better handle on your spools, give *Stringliner Pro* a try. Unlike the original Stringliner, the Pro version includes a crank handle that makes reeling in a hundred feet of string much faster and easier. The reels are sold with up to 1,080 feet of string in colors from white to Day-Glo pink. Prices start at about \$6.

**Stringliner**, 800/356-6127, [www.stringliner.com](http://www.stringliner.com).



**JOB-SITE COMMUNICATION**



**Cell-Phone Services.** Remember when cellular technology meant carrying a portable phone the size of a shoebox? Fortunately, times have changed. Today's cellular phones are smaller and way more multifunctional. Cellular provider *Nextel* offers some really cool services that can make your life easier and your business more efficient. For example, there's NextMail (\$7.50 per month), which allows you to send streaming MP3 voice messages from your cell phone to any e-mail recipient. You can also track employee hours and locations by using your Nextel phone and Xora GPS TimeTrack, and then import the data into your payroll or billing software. Another Nextel partner, Creditel, can process credit-card transactions wirelessly from your Java-enabled Nextel phone. Isn't modern technology great?

**Nextel, 800/639-8359, [www.nextel.com](http://www.nextel.com).**



**Instant Photography.** Before digital, Polaroid dominated the world of job-site photography. Now the company is hoping to recapture some of its previous market share with the recently launched *One600 JobPro Camera*. The new camera can focus on objects as close as two feet and includes an impact-resistant case. For those of you who think Polaroid pictures are headed for the planet of such defunct media as beta video and eight-track tape, the manufacturer points out that Polaroids are often preferred as evidence in civil and criminal trials because — unlike film or digital images — they can't be manipulated after processing. Furthermore, the new JobPro costs only about \$50 and doesn't require a computer or a printer.

**Polaroid, 800/662-8337, [www.polaroid.com](http://www.polaroid.com).**



**Long-Range Radio.** On a commercial or large residential site, keeping track of your employees or even just asking one of them a question can mean walking around for 15 minutes. If you don't have that kind of time to waste, try a Motorola XTN Series Radio. These lightweight two-way radios have a range of up to six miles and are a whole different breed from the cheap consumer knockoffs. The two-watt transmitter works well in steel structures and in urban environments. A co-worker and I used a pair of *XU2600s* to stay in touch while we cruised last year's Builders' Show. The expansive, steel-framed convention hall had no effect on reception, and several unintentional drop tests on the hall's concrete floor proved that the devices can definitely take a hit. I found the XTN Series XU2600 on the Web for \$265.

**Motorola, 888/567-7347, [www.motorola.com](http://www.motorola.com).**



## DeWalt D25900 Demolition Hammer

by Dave Haines

I recently took on a large commercial kitchen renovation that involved removing one masonry bearing wall and cutting new doorways in another. That much heavy demolition requires more than a 10-pound sledgehammer and some elbow grease — just thinking about swinging a sledge for eight hours makes my arms hurt.

What we needed was some kind of demo hammer. My first thought was a breaker hammer, like the ones I'd used in the past, but I knew that holding such a heavy tool horizontally for extended periods while I took down the masonry wouldn't be easy. After doing some research at my local tool dealer, I decided on a smaller demoli-

tion hammer, DeWalt's D25900, which uses SDS-Max bits and chisels.

It was the hammer's compact size that most impressed me. It's only 25 inches long and weighs just over 26 pounds. The small size was very important because we would be working on a scaffold and between the studs while we temporarily supported the floor above. Some of the other demo hammers I considered looked bulky and hard to handle in tight spots.

### Features

Running a demo hammer can be tough on your hands and upper body, but the D25900 does a pretty good job of canceling vibration. It has a comfortable feel, with a large, soft-grip handle at the rear and a rotating "D" handle near the front of the tool. It also has what DeWalt calls Active Vibration Control, which is designed to reduce the amount of vibration reaching the user's hands. For me, the combination of features made the tool comfortable to use.

According to DeWalt, the tool puts out 18<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> foot-pounds of impact; a rotating control dial allows you to cut



back on that impact when necessary. I found that the hammer had plenty of power for breaking up masonry. The rocker-type switch that turns it on and off is large enough that you can change your finger position and wear gloves.

### Performance

The tool works great for masonry demo. In my job, once the top course of block was gone, I aimed the chisel at the mortar joints and the blocks broke free with minimum effort. One of the tool's best features is the rotating tool holder, which allows you to turn the chisel, instead of holding the tool in an awkward position. It's great for attacking brick and block, because you can



An adjustable front handle and a padded rear one make DeWalt's D25900 demo hammer comfortable to hold. The front handle (above), which adjusts with a large, easy-to-grip knob, rotates 360 degrees around the housing and pivots forward and back. The rear handle (right) has enough room for a two-handed grip.



## Toolbox

align the chisel for both horizontal and vertical mortar joints.

I also tried breaking up some 6-inch-thick concrete while making a channel for new drain lines. I scored the concrete with a circ saw and abrasive



A rotary switch with 19 positions adjusts the tool's power from a maximum 18<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> foot-pounds of impact energy down to about 4 foot-pounds. The D25900 accepts SDS-Max chisels, a type commonly used in rotary hammers.


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blade and used the demo hammer for breaking out the concrete. My saw wouldn't cut more than halfway through, so removing the concrete took some effort. If you have a lot of thick concrete to break up, I'd recommend getting something bigger. The D25900 worked okay, but a breaker hammer would be faster.

When backfilling around the new drain lines with some crushed stone, I compacted the stone with the D25900 and a 5-inch tamper plate made by Bosch (part no. HS1828). The tamper requires a shank that's sold separately. Shanks are available in both an SDS-Max version (part no. HS1927) and two hex-shaped versions (parts no. HS1827 and HS1527). The shank fits in the tool holder just like a chisel. It worked great for compacting the stone — and it seems it would be a good way to compact soil for small footings, too.

Unfortunately, I did encounter one significant problem with the D25900. The four Allen-head screws that secured the bottom section of the tool to the main housing either vibrated loose or were never fully tightened at the factory. One fell out completely while I was using the tool. That's when I noticed another screw was already missing and the two remaining ones were loose. A little Loctite, I'm sure, would solve the problem.

That said, I really think the D25900 is a good option when you have a demo situation similar to mine.

The DeWalt D25900K (kit) sells for about \$800 and includes a large case and a bull-point chisel. 

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