

Milwaukee's Quick New Side-Sliding Utility Knife

by Bruce Greenlaw

I've used a Stanley 10-499 quick-change retractable utility knife forever, for all the usual tasks — sharpening carpenter pencils, opening boxes, scoring drywall, and cutting building paper, nylon line, composition shingles, and insulation. It slips easily into the holder in my tool belt, and spare blades stack in a plastic tray that swings out of the handle at the press of a tab. Blades are installed and removed by shifting the slider all the way forward and then pressing a button on the nose of the knife while slipping the blade in or out.

I've stuck with this old knife for so long because it works better than the “ergonomic” new ones I've tried, most of which actually make blade changes a hassle. But recently I discovered a happy exception. Milwaukee's sleek new 48-22-1910 side-sliding utility knife (800/729-3878, milwaukeetool.com) takes everything I like about my old Stanley and makes it even better — with no frills added.

Back to Basics

Milwaukee's powder-coated aluminum knife is about $\frac{3}{8}$ inch thicker than the Stanley, but it still fits in my



Like the author's old Stanley 10-499 (top), Milwaukee's side-sliding knife (above) has a simple no-frills design, but it makes blade changes even quicker and easier.

toolbelt. Up to five spare blades store inside its comfortable rubber-coated plastic grip; you reach them by simply pinching the grip in the front and swinging it open. A small rare-earth magnet grabs the spares by their razor edge to prevent them from falling out. When I dropped one of these knives on a slab, the grip popped partway open, but the magnet didn't let go of the blades. The magnet does, however, let you remove blades easily.

Sometimes when I'm using my old Stanley, I accidentally move the slider with my thumb while making a cut. Milwaukee placed its slider on the left side of the knife to prevent that problem. I'm right-handed, but I see no drawbacks for lefties.

A Fast Blade Change

To remove an installed blade from the Milwaukee, you move the slider all the way forward and then press a button up front and pull the blade out. To install a blade, you move the slider to the same position and just push the blade in until it clicks. No knife I've ever tried has made it easier to swap or reverse blades. And the slider — at least when new — operates smoothly. An integrated wire stripper accommodates up to 10-gauge wire and might come in handy in a pinch.

According to Milwaukee, this knife lasted twice as long as other professional-grade knives when subjected to life-testing. It comes with a lifetime warranty against manufacturing defects and costs \$10 to \$12.

Bruce Greenlaw is a JLC contributing editor.



Spare blades store inside the knife's rubber-coated grip (top). A small rare-earth magnet keeps them from falling out (above). To install a blade, you just slide it in until it clicks (left).

Peltor Alert Headset

by Dan Nehm

I've used several different types of hearing protection over the years, but they all had one fatal flaw: I couldn't hear what was going on around me — or hear people talking to me — when I was wearing them. That's why I was excited to discover Peltor's Alert radio headset, my latest cool new tool: It allows me to carry on conversations, listen to music, and protect myself from hearing damage without constantly fumbling around with my earphones.

Selective Sound Control

This headset isn't like other ones I've tried, which muffle all noise. Instead, the Alert (800/665-2942, peltor.com) actually picks up ambient sounds via a pair of omnidirectional microphones and then filters out the loud noises before sending the signals along to the ear pieces. When I'm wearing the headset, I can clearly hear people talking to me or even listen to a radio in the room; but if I turn on a loud machine, that sound is limited to a safe level. Since I can control ambient sound levels with a volume knob, I can shut off the sound around me completely, or I can boost it so that I hear more than I would with my naked ears (though amplification is limited to a safe 82 dB).

The headphones have a noise-reduction rating of 25 dBA, comparable to that of other types of hearing protection.

Music

The Alert has an integrated AM/FM radio, also with its own volume control. I don't use this feature much because I can plug my iPhone into the headset and listen to either my own music library or virtually any radio station in the world via Internet streaming. By using different options and accessories, you can tie into two-way radios, bluetooth devices, and PA systems. You can also



The Peltor Alert headset has electronic circuitry that filters out loud noises while allowing the user to hear conversations or listen to its built-in AM/FM radio.

get the headset to work with a hardhat.

Sound quality is good, and the gel-filled ear cushions are comfortable. Since the headset goes over the ears, it tends to keep them warm. I appreciate this in cool conditions — but not so much when it's hot.

Cost

At \$125, the headset costs a lot more than throw-away foam ear plugs. However, it's a bargain compared with the \$2,500 hearing aid I recently had to start wearing, thanks in part to occupational hearing loss.

Hearing damage is cumulative and irreversible, and it's something you may not even notice until it's too late. So don't neglect your hearing. Whether you choose this headset or something else, be sure to wear some kind of protection.

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