

## Tools

Starting work on a new model railroad layout is exciting. But even if you've already decided on a track plan and have a vision for what the scenery will look like, you have an important job to do first: Provide a firm foundation for your model railroad—a strong table.

To build your foundation, you'll need to make sure you have the necessary tools to do the job. Knowing how to use them will

save time and make a big difference in the quality of your work. If you don't already have these tools and you're worried about the expense, don't worry. They have plenty of other uses around the house.

It's also a good idea to understand the materials you'll be working with. We'll look at those in the next section.

Let's get started with a look at the basic tools you'll need to build your table.

### Power tools

You don't need to go out and buy a \$500 table saw to build quality benchwork, but a few smaller power tools will certainly be a great help.



#### ► Power drill/driver.

A combination cordless drill and driver is the handiest power tool you can own—and not just for building your train table. Drill bits are available in sets of commonly used sizes. Several types of driving bits are made, including reversible Phillips/standard, square drive, and single-head bits.



► **Table-mounted saws** like this compound miter saw aren't necessary to build benchwork, but if you already have one you'll find it useful.



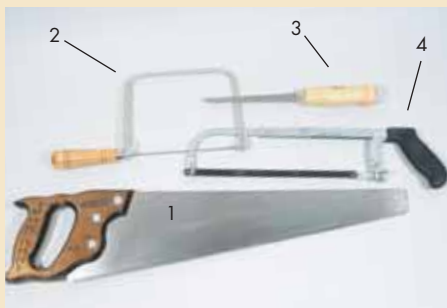
▲ **Circular saw.** Second only to the drill on the list of useful power tools is a saw. If you don't have a table saw, you can use a circular saw for cutting large sheet material. Circular saws can also be used to trim dimensional lumber.



▲ **Jigsaw.** Handheld power jigsaws like this one are used to cut curves in plywood, hardboard, and other material.

## Hand tools

With the many power tools on the market today, it's easy to forget that hand tools are still very important in working with wood and other materials. Here are some that you should have in your toolbox.



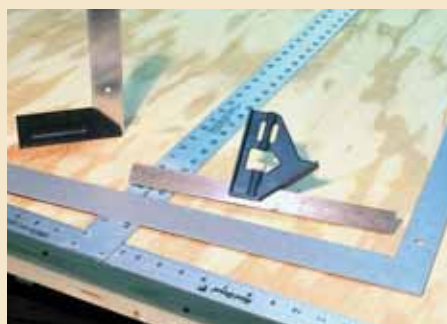
▲ **Handsaws.** Common handsaws useful in building benchwork include: (1) crosscut saw, used for cutting dimensional lumber and plywood; (2) coping saw, for making fine curved cuts; (3) drywall saw, for cutting holes in closed areas; and (4) hacksaw, for cutting metal.



▲ **Miter box.** If you don't have a power miter saw, you can use a hand miter saw for precision cuts. A small inexpensive miter box like this one typically has saw guides cut at 45- and 90-degree angles.



▲ **Screwdrivers.** The two most common types of screwdrivers are standard (slotted) and Phillips (cross pattern). Screwdrivers come in a variety of sizes, with long and short shafts and blades in small, medium, and large sizes. Select the right size and shaft length for the job at hand. It pays to have at least two sizes of each on hand. The curved-handle screwdriver at left is useful for getting into tight spaces.



▲ **Squares.** When building benchwork—or anything else with wood, for that matter—it's important to keep pieces square with each other. Combination and try squares are handy for marking 45- and 90-degree angles on lumber. Framing squares (also called carpenter's squares) and drywall squares are handy for marking large sheet material and checking the squareness of a joint.

► **Miscellaneous tools.** Other useful tools include files, a straightedge, a tape measure, a utility knife, a Stanley Surform plane (for cleaning up rough edges and leveling joints), a sanding block, and punches.



◀ **Clamps.** Since you have only two hands, you'll need a few clamps. Common clamps, like the silver and red examples shown here, are very useful, but a clasp-type clamp like the one at the bottom is much better.



—Text and photos by Jeff Wilson