

# CONSTRUCTION TOOL COLORS

There is one very important color of paint on a construction site, the color red. **Red Your Dead** is a term I've heard hundreds of times. When you see it, stop and think, it means something.

Yellow means caution. Green means go, same as street lights. There are seven construction colors, white, green, yellow, red, blue, brown, black. These use to be used a lot, I still use them today.

Lumber manufacturers used to paint the ends of their lumber packages, 2x2's white, 2x3's green, 2x4's yellow, 2x6's blue, 2x8's black, 2x10's green, 2x12's red, 2x14's brown. At two hundred yards away they could tell you the size of lumber that bundle was. This was to recognize sizes and to seal the ends. The shots for a power actuated nail gun (pan nailer) were white 2, green 3, yellow 4, red 5, blue 6, brown 7, and black 8, and still are today for Hilti and others.

Dowels used to be 1/16 black, 2/16 white, 3/16 green, 4/16 yellow, 5/16 red, 6/16 blue, 7/16 brown, 8/16 black, 10/16 green, 12/16 red, 14/16 brown, 16/16 or 1" was white. Now nearly all manufactures have these colors mixed up. But a few of us still remember them.

In electrical, the white, green, yellow (I have seen yellow as a hot wire, neutral or extra ground wire,, optional, when you do this to the yellow wire always put a piece of red tape on then end for hot, green tape for ground and white for neutral) are all neutrals or grounds. Red, blue, brown and black are all hot.

I paint my drill bits, 1/16" black, 2/16 white, 3/16 green, 4/16 yellow, 5/16 red, 6/16 blue, 7/16 brown, 8/16 black, 9/16 white, 10/16 green, 11/16 yellow, 12/16 red, 13/16

blue, 14/16 brown, 15/16 black, and 1" white. I paint my end wrenches, sockets, nut drivers, and many other tools in the same sequence. By the way, I can tell the difference between a red 5/16 wrench and a red 3/4" wrench or socket, and so can you. The metric wrenches I leave clear in the middle so as to know they are metric; the metric sockets have a clear bottom half. Once you get used to them being painted it will really save many hours per year of hunting drill bit sizes that aren't there anymore. If I need a #14 metric wrench I get the big brown one, not the small 7mm which is also brown. The best way to learn this sequence is to get a set of spade (paddle) bits, 1/4" through 1", in 1/16" increments. Paint them and before you know it you will learn the sequence. Also paint your 1/8" and 3/16" drill bits white and green, most used bits for pilot holes.

I mark a 29 piece bit index this way. I call out the 3 bits in between these colored bits as 1/4's of a 1/16. The bits following the red 5/16's bit are 5/4, 5/2, 5/3, then 6/16 (blue). If I want a 25/64 bit, I say 6 1/4. The 27/64 call out is 6 3/4. I can get a 21/64 (5 1/4) bit from an index in 2 seconds. I can get a white 9/16 wrench from my box in seconds, I can get any wrench I have in my tool box without have to look for the usually unreadable label size stamps they put on them.

I watched a caterpillar mechanic the other day look for two minutes for a 13/16<sup>th</sup> wrench; if it had been painted blue he would have had it in two seconds.

In plumbing red is hot, blue is cold, green is sewer, yellow is gas, oil and propane.

**Red for gas pump handles and caps and green for diesel pump handles and caps.**

A dairyman had a farm hand fill a John Deere diesel loader with gas the other

day and you can only imagine what it will cost him, the engine looked like a stinger missile hit it. The handle wasn't painted and the cap was chrome. The hand didn't speak English but he would not have done it if the pump handle was green and the cap was green, they are all painted now as I went out and painted all of his caps and pump handles for him for he is a good friend of mine.

This may sound silly to a lot of you painting your spade bits, wrenches, sockets nut drivers, drill bits and other sized tools and materials.

I have got an idea for you, paint your most used end or box end wrench you have which is a 9/16" or the 1/2" wrench and socket. All you will need is a can of white spray paint and some black spray paint. Paint these only and then when you go to looking for your 1/2" wrench you will get the black one, then hopefully a light will come on and you will see that maybe you should paint the others or at least the ones you use the most. I have been doing this for over 20 years and I cannot even imagine how many hundreds of hours of looking for sizes of tools this painting technique has saved me.



Here is a set of metric and standard tools. The top red socket is a #12 metric deep socket (bottom half is clear), the second one is a #12 metric ratchet wrench (middle of wrench is clear). The third is a standard 9/16 ratchet wrench (solid color) and the bottom is a white 9/16" deep socket.

**I am serious about this below, I want you to do it, won't take you 15 minutes.**

Do this, go put in a pile about a couple of dozen metric and standard sockets all mixed up and in another pile a couple or so dozen of metric and standard wrenches all mixed up and then pick out these four tools that are in the picture above. Then paint them as I have here, pile them up again and then pick them out of the pile. If that don't sell you on this article you have my permission to search, look and cuss all you want to trying to find the correct size.

I have been told by some shade tree mechanics (of which some are the best mechanics I ever met) and by some certified college educated mechanics that painting their tools as I have instructed in this article has tremendously made their job easier and saved them hundreds of hours per year looking for tool sizes.

All you have to do is watch a mechanic sometime that has his or her wrenches piled in a cabinet tool drawer and watch them looking for a certain size wrench or socket costing you about 60-90 dollars an hour.

And one more reminder, paint the positive post on your batteries red (hot) and the negative post green (ground) and then make sure all your booster cables are painted the same way and be double certain you don't get the cables crossed, do a continuity test if you need to, but paint them correctly, if could save your life if a battery top blows up and decapitates you or your son. I wrote an article about that a couple of months ago.

Clean all your greasy wrenches and sockets with paint thinner before painting. Thanks, Bob

**Bob Johnston, carpenter**

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