

TOOL ORGANIZATION

I charge \$35 an hour when I build a house or structure plus 10% of the total cost (labor and material) of which I get at the end of the job. For staircases I charge \$50 an hour plus 15%. Contractors and homeowners don't call me unless they need me, but I stay busy all of the time. I will not bid a house as most contractors do.

Plumbers and Electricians get almost double this when they go out by the hour. A lot of contractors I know cringe at the thought of paying a carpenter over minimum wage.

Carpenters are thought of by some contractors as in the class of a mule, good hard worker, but not the sharpest knife in the drawer.

If you go to a job and expect to draw top carpenter wages and you show up with your tools thrown in the back of the truck, in a pile, and then you start to work and spend one third of your time searching for tools and going home and getting what you forgot, or borrowing from the homeowner, you may be in for a surprise when the homeowner or contractor tells you that he thinks he will get someone else to do the job. You need to be organized, and stay organized all of the time.

Most carpenters I hire, and I mean about 75% of them, show up with part of a tool bag, a hammer their wife gave them, a

tape with the hook bent and it won't go back into the case unless they take 5 minutes to push it back in, and a piece of a pencil, but they want top wages. If you are in this category, this article is for you.



This is my Delta tool box on my truck. The cut off oil cups on the left have nails and the ones on the right have screws. I have 2 circular saws, recip saw, grinder, belt sander, router, 4 nail guns, jigsaw, planer, and all of the accessories and replacement blades in this one box.

You can blindfold me and I can get you any tool or part in it.



This is under the backseat of my truck; I have my tool bags, hammers, chisels and many other tools in this area.

These are my most used tools and are the easiest to get to. Tool organization is a money maker if you are doing a bid job.



This is the other side, 5 drills, bits, saws and accessories.



This is my drywall box; it has most of the tools I need to do drywall.

[Expand these pictures on top to see the pictures in more detail.](#)



This is my Pan (powder actuated nail gun) nail box. Loads, nails,

and oil. Green is #3, yellow is #4, and red is #5.

These boxes are easy to build and save you and your employer a lot of time and money, and it just looks better when you show up and you are organized and know where your tools are at.



This is a set of sockets and box ends. If you will remember a few weeks ago I posted ["Colors, be sure and read this one"](#). I hope you did.

If you pile all of these wrenches in a pile and ask me to get a $\frac{1}{2}$ wrench, I can do it in 2 seconds. If you pile up all of the sockets and ask for a $\frac{3}{4}$ " socket, I can do it in the same time. I don't have to get a magnifying glass and look for the size stamp that is worn out and gone. If you ask me for a 1" or $\frac{9}{16}$ " drill bit from a pile of bits I can do it again, in the same time, and if you will listen to me and paint your tools, you can do it too. It will save you hundreds hours in the course of a year and is one of the most basic steps to organizing your tools.

Now I am going to give you the color sequence again. I got this from Hilti and Ramset many years ago and from some old carpenters and a blade operator (road grader). It used to be common knowledge but now it has nearly gone by the wayside. I have expanded the sequence to my mechanic tools, drill bits, drivers, and anything else that has a size. Here are the colors with sizes:

1=black, 2=white, 3=green,
4=yellow, 5=red, 6=blue,
7=brown, 8=black, 9= white,
10=green, 11=yellow, 12=red,
13=blue, 14=brown, 15=black,
16=white.

The first project I want you to do is to get a set of spade (paddle) bits (¼"-1") and paint them these colors. Now go and get you a set of sockets, ¼"-1" and paint them. Get you a set of nut drivers ¼"-7/16" and paint them and then a set of ¼"-1" wrenches and paint them. I will guarantee you in about 2 weeks when you need a 7/16" spade bit, brown will be the first thing that comes to your mind. You need a 3/8" socket, blue will be your thought. And if you think that I or you cannot tell the difference between a blue 3/8" spade bit or socket and a blue 13/16" spade bit or socket you are wrong. Anybody can.

I went to a lumber supplier in Roswell about a year ago and I was amazed, the bundles of lumber all had the ends painted (to seal them from moisture) the

2x2's were white, 2x4's yellow, 2x6's blue, 2x8's black, 2x10's green, 2x12's red. Can you imagine sitting on a forklift and seeing a bundle of lumber with the ends paint green and knowing that they are 2x10's? I only know 2 lumber manufacturers that still do this color sequence. Saves a lot of time.

Hilti and Ramset used to paint their shots #3 green, #4 yellow, #5 red #6 blue and so on. Some companies still do.

A dowel manufacturer in California paints their dowels in the exact order I gave you.

Another interesting fact: white, green and yellow in electrical are all neutrals or grounds, red, blue, brown and black are all hot.

To a blade operator a white flag is 2", green is 3", yellow is 4", red is 5" and so on for cut and fill.

I paint my steel drill bits (I have a 29 piece set) and for instance I need a 21/64" bit, it's to the right of the red 5/16", I call this bit a 5¼/16, 11/32 to me is 5½/16, 23/64 is 5¾/16 then 3/8" blue, then to the right is a 6¼/16 is 25/64. Sounds confusing and a little silly, it's not.



We were installing door closers the other day and I taught a carpenter the first three colors, white, green and yellow. 2-2 $\frac{1}{4}$ -2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -2 $\frac{3}{4}$ -3-3 $\frac{1}{4}$ -3 $\frac{1}{2}$ -3 $\frac{3}{4}$ -4-4 $\frac{1}{4}$ -4 $\frac{1}{2}$ -4 $\frac{3}{4}$, he caught on and gave me the bits I needed out of the index. He knew the 5/32 (2 $\frac{1}{2}$) was in between the white and green. Saved a lot of time and frustration for both of us.

Tell a machinist to give you a 23/64 bit and watch him search for it or a mechanic to give you a $\frac{3}{4}$ wrench or socket. Some know exactly where they are, but then put all the wrenches in a pile under a car, where is a little dark, and then ask. It's the big red one, if he has them painted.

Then ask me for a 23/64" (5 $\frac{3}{4}$ /16) bit and I can get it fast, it's left of the 6/16" blue bit.

Another interesting fact, the two end colors are not colors at all, white and black, they are neutrals.

The three center colors are our primary colors yellow-red-blue.

The second color and the sixth color are mixes, blue and yellow make green, blue and red make brown. This sequence of colors didn't happen by mistakes, it was thought up over a hundred years ago when they started mixing paint in various colors for customers.

We use four sizes of framing nails 16 sinkers, 12 sinkers, and 8 sinkers.

I cut the top and the top front half out of plastic milk jugs and paint them white 16 for sinkers,

red for 12 sinkers, black for 8 sinkers.

Some of the cowboys I work with will go to change the nails in his bag and throw the 8's in the box of 12's and then it's for me or someone else to sort them or throw them away. They can catch on pretty quick as to these colored jugs. The jugs also serve another purpose. When I send some carpenters up to frame a roof I always send a rope up with them with a hook on the end, and when they run out of nails we can hook a jug of nails and they can pull them up. Or when they drop their hammer (sometimes, I think, trying to hit me in the head) we can send their hammer back up.

I want to add that when I paint my metric sockets I only paint the top half. When I paint my metric wrenches I don't paint the center of the wrench, another easy way to keep them separated from the standards.

By the way, as I explain in detail in the Carpenter Book, I use only 16th's when I do measurements, a 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ " to me is called out one-four.

Like I said last week in the Burn and Knot article, I am leaving and going to a job to be a superintendent where they will be about 100 carpenters and laborers.

The contractor knows that I can organize a job and create production. I had much rather have my tool bags on and driving

some nails, but for what they are paying me I'll do what they ask.

You can take this article with a grain of salt or you can at least try the spade bits and sockets.

But I will guarantee you it will grow on you. When I get to a job, I can find my tools and I will have all of them when I leave. At least give this organization business a try.

<http://carpenterbooks.com>

Bob Johnston, carpenter