

We all work with hand tools practically every day. Familiarity can lead to complacency. Faulty tools or wrongly used tools can cause nasty injuries and produce poor quality work.

Taking reasonable care of your own Health and Safety, means keeping tools in good condition and using them expertly.

Sharp tools, which cut steel, can cut flesh without trouble.

Hammers, which can drive nails, can squash fingers too.

Work Equipment Regulations require employers to ensure that tools are 'suitable' and maintained in good order. They rely on you, as skilled trade's persons, to assist them in this by reporting immediately if something is not suitable or is broken.

The following points are areas where care is needed (and abuse common).

### 1. Spanners:

Must be the right size or else they are automatically not 'suitable'. Ring spanners are better than open ended spanners. Open ended spanners are generally better than adjustable spanners.

### 2. Adjustable Spanners:

Although very convenient, these can very quickly become dangerous due to wear on the jaws and adjusting mechanism. If the jaws are no longer more or less parallel, or the sliding jaw is wobbly, report the tool as 'unsuitable'.

### 3. Stillsons:

These also suffer in time from wear on the mechanism. The spring will take up a certain amount of wear, but if the spring is exhausted, or the gripper teeth on the jaws are worn out, report the tool as 'unsuitable'. NEVER attempt to gain extra leverage by using pipe over the handle. If the temptation arises obviously the tool is too small and therefore 'unsuitable'.

### 4. Files:

The handle is part of the tool. Without a handle the tool is 'unsuitable', and the tang extremely dangerous. Files are very brittle and must not be used as levers or chisels. If a file breaks, fragments of sharp metal are likely to fly off.

### 5. Cold Chisels and Punches:

When the head turns over after prolonged use, forming a 'mushroom', grind it off to prevent flying fragments. Keeping chisels sharp reduces the tendency for 'mushrooming'.

### 6. Hammers:

Use the right weight hammer for the job. ('suitability' again). Ensure hammer heads are secure, with proper wedges (good order). Never shorten a hammer shaft as this spoils the balance and could strain the wrist.



#### **7. Screwdrivers:**

These should fit the slot in the screw head, so use the correct size. The point should be 'cross ground' to minimize the risk of slipping. Do not use them as chisels. Cross Point (Phillips) screwdrivers are not generally re-sharpenable, so discard when wear makes them unsuitable.

#### **8. Knives:**

Retractable knives (Stanley) are commendable, but do not abuse them where a preferable alternative exists e.g. cable stripping.

Use a purpose made cable stripper.

#### **9. Hacksaws**

Use the correct size with the correct blade for the job. High Speed blades last longer, but are very brittle. Slow steady cutting keeps the blade cool and gives better results. Always make sure the work is properly secured before starting to cut.

#### **10. Tool Box/Bag**

All hand tools should be put away when not in use. Good Housekeeping prevents damage and loss and keeps them sharp and available when needed. Do not walk about with sharp tools in pockets. Serious injury can result in the event of a slip or fall.

Use a tool bag or box.