



FNNBOA
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Eagle's Eye on Housing: Toolkit

By the time you read this, Christmas may have passed, and you ended up getting your sweetie a box of chocolates or a bouquet of flowers. BORING!

Valentine's day is fast approaching and you now have the opportunity to make amends and really impress her. The proliferation of do-it-yourself shows has stirred up many people's creative urges around the home. Show your gal friend you love her by giving her a handy gal's toolkit built just for her!

Not all tool kits are created equal. Gals and guys really differ when it comes to tools. Guys generally believe the bigger the tool, the better. But in designing a gal's tool kit, less is more — in many ways. Gals like simplicity. Nothing would please a mom more than having one all-purpose tool that would fit in the kitchen drawer. There are many types of fancy multi-tools, but no one should be without certain basics. Simplicity aside, look for appropriate weight, size, balance and comfort.



- **Start off with a tool box:** A kitchen drawer serves as a great home for tools, but lugging that drawer around can be a pain. A soft-sided cloth tool bag is the latest and greatest in tool storage. Size and compartments will dictate price, but you can get a good one for about \$20.
- **Hammer:** It's the foundation of most tool kits. Hammers are sold by weight in ounces. She likely won't be building a barn, so a 13- to 16-ounce hammer with a comfortable rubber grip will suit her just fine. Be sure the hammer has a smooth face to avoid dings; claws for pulling nails; and consider a magnetized nail groove to pick up and hold nails in place. About \$15.



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- **Screwdriver:** An all-in-one, multi-bit screwdriver with a single handle and shaft, and an assortment of bits that will work with 90 percent of the screws on Earth. As with the hammer, a comfortable padded rubber ergonomic grip will make all the difference in power and safety. A butter knife works just fine for slotted screws, but the most common bits are a #2 Philips (star) or a #2 Roberts (square). About \$12.
- **Measuring tape:** A good-quality 12-foot to 16-foot tape measure is lightweight and will be long enough for most home-improvement jobs such as measuring curtains, picture layouts and trim. An oval housing and a rubber boot add comfort. About \$10.
- **Level:** A small torpedo bubble level (about 8 to 10 inches long) is all you need. Using the torpedo level with a straight edge will increase the length. A torpedo level will allow you to level pictures and appliances such as the fridge and stove. No more crooked cakes! Torpedo level: about \$8.
- **Pliers:** There are three styles of pliers that no mom's tool kit should be without. Standard pliers for general use; long-nose pliers, super for bending and cutting wire or for holding small finish nails for hammering; and adjustable wide-mouth, tongue-and-groove pliers, great for small household plumbing repairs. Look for padded rubber handles for added comfort and a better grip. About \$10.
- **Wrench:** A small (6-inch) adjustable wrench (also known as a crescent wrench) is a must for assembling furniture, tightening loose nuts and changing a bicycle tire. About \$15.
- **Putty knife:** A small (2-inch-wide blade), flexible, metal putty knife is great for patching holes in walls and for scraping a rough surface. Plastic and wooden handles are out; oval, padded, soft-grip, ergonomically designed handles are the rage. About \$5.
- **Utility knife:** A utility knife with a soft rubber grip for opening the boxes from all those new shoe deliveries. About \$5.
- **Mini hacksaw:** An all-purpose hacksaw for cutting tubing, pipe, dowels and other small items. Saves the kitchen knives big time! About \$10.

Other small items include:

- **Sandpaper:** An assortment of coarse, medium, fine and extra-fine, for touching up dings and dents in furniture.
- **Rubber jar-opening pad:** For getting a grip on things, including jar tops.
- **String:** To tie things and make a straight line.
- **Glue:** A small bottle of white glue to repair a damaged picture frame or kitchen chair; a tube of Crazy Glue for everything else.



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- **Dark-brown shoe polish:** It covers all wood flaws.
- **Nails and screws:** A small assortment of finish nails and screws for hanging this or repairing that.

And last, but certainly not least: duct tape and WD 40! Duct tape for when you want them to stay together and WD for when you want to take them apart.