

Survival Gunsmithing*Survival Gunsmithing*

By Gadget

As all of us know, having a weapon and being able to use it are two different things. The same thing holds true for cleaning and maintenance/repair work. When you purchase any firearm, you should think of it as a package deal: (1) the firearm, (2) accessories (sling, scope, holster, etc.), (3) ammunition, (4) specific cleaning gear (caliber), (5) spare parts, and (6) the weapons instruction manual (exploded diagrams and parts list). No matter how or where you come by the weapon, GET THE BOOK! Simply writing or calling the manufacturer will get you exactly what you need. This will be the bible for that weapon and enable you to figure out what's wrong with a malfunctioning weapon and order the necessary parts.

Repairs in the field are usually accomplished with whatever is on hand...a small screwdriver, a multi-tool, or even a pocketknife. But in your base/retreat, a certain amount of tools and supplies are a must. The following list is a suggestion and is not the endear of lists but it will accomplish most of the things that you need to do. Your own experience and knowledge will also help dictate additions and/pr deletions. Also, it should be noted that certain weapons require special tools to either assist with repair work or in the actual operation of the weapon. For example, a sight adjustment tool for an AR-15 A1 model, a mainspring vise for a S&W revolver, a bushing wrench for a Colt model 1911 .45, well you get my drift. Just be fully aware of what kind of TLC your "Baby" needs.

Survival involves making do and employing makeshift methods for a lot of things but this shouldn't include repairing your firearms. Spend the money and get top-quality tools. You paid top dollar for the weapon itself, didn't you? Get the best you can possibly afford.

One thing I want to mention and I feel like this should go in the tool category, is a copy of Brownell's catalog. It is the bible for firearm tools and supplies. (Address listed at end of article.) Get a copy now if you don't already have one. A FFL is not required to order, you just have to pay a higher price than if you have one. Now, on to the list.

PUNCHES: In general you will need 2 sets. (1) a general set that includes starting and through punches and a prick punch. (2) a roll pin punch set. Always use the correct size closest to the pin or damage will result.

PLIERS: Generally, 2 will do most of the work for you: (1) small, curved needle nose and (2) smooth-jawed parallel pliers. There are others, like side-cutters that you will add as your experience and needs grows.

SCREWDRIVERS: The easiest and best way is to get a set of bits and a handle. Brownell's, B-Square, and Chapman's all make sets that will include an assortment of bits to do most of the jobs you want to do. You will need bits for slotted, phillips, and Allen-head. Make SURE they are the hollow-ground type that fits the screw snugly instead of the standard type of screwdriver we all have laying around. This will prevent marring and ruining of the screw. Also get yourself a set of jeweler's screwdrivers; they will come in very handy.

HAMMERS: (1) at least 1 brass hammer in the 2 ½- 5 oz range (one of each size is ideal), (2) a dual faced hammer with nylon, brass, and steel inserts (get extra faces also), and (3) a small dead-blow or no-mar hammer.

There are several tools that you will be adding as your skills grow and become more proficient. These will include, among others:

(1) a nylon/brass drift punch (Brownell's has one with replaceable ends)

(2) a GOOD bench vise (you SHOULD already have this)

(3) an assortment of files and stones (fitting and repairing). These include a set of needle files, large and small sized flat and round in different cuts, a sight-base file, a narrow pillar file, and a set of rasps. Also some bench stones, India and Arkansas, for working hard surfaces. A note about files...NEVER, NEVER drag a file back across the work; lift it at the end of your stroke. And get a file card (file cleaning brush). Files, like firearms, will last a long time with the proper care.

(4) Set of dental picks (can be ordered or ask at your local dentist's office)

- (5) A good bench knife
- (6) Set each of Allen wrenches in standard and metric
- (7) Boresighter and arbors if you use scopes (can save lots of ammo using these. Instructions are included)
- (8) Measuring tools: a minimum of 6" scale and a 0-6" calipers. If you get serious about gunsmithing, you will be adding micrometers, inside & outside dividers, and host of other devices. Start with the basics and you'll be okay.
- (9) A good quality hacksaw with assorted extra blades
- (10) If you have power generating capabilities, get a Dremel Moto-Tool and a variety of bits and attachments. This is probably the handiest tool you will ever own for drilling, sanding, polishing, cutting, etching, grinding, routing, reslotting screws and a host of other jobs.
- (11) A 3/8" electric drill and an assortment of bits and attachments

Some tips and hints:

- (1) ALWAYS wear safety glasses!! ALWAYS wear safety glasses!! ALWAYS wear...well, you get my drift.
- (2) Watch where your hands are and don't put yourself into the line of fire with ANY tool. You WILL be cut and you don't need that at any time.
- (3) Always clamp items to be cut, sawed, or filed. Pad the jaws of the vise if needs be.
- (4) Be aware of spring-loaded assemblies (bolts, mainsprings, etc.) You CAN lose an eye if a part flies loose. (also see tip #1)
- (5) Freeing a stuck screw. Set a well-fitting screwdriver into the slot and gently tap straight down with a small hammer while turning. This will usually do it without all the necessary cursing and sweating.
- (6) DON'T forget the cleaning gear, both hardware and expendables (solvent, patches, oils, etc.) and lots of it.

As you read through the mentioned catalogs, your list of tools WANTS will really start to grow. But you need to stick with the basics and avoid all the bells and whistles until your skill matches the desired tool. You will have to decide how far into the field of gunsmithing you want to get into. It's worth noting that the gunsmith can be a VERY important person in a community, in any kind of economy. If you have the time and money, I recommend the Colorado School of Trades; their course includes up to full fabrication of firearms from scratch. Since most of us don't have this opportunity, other options are available. A mail-order course is available from NRI Schools. I have taken this one and it is a good course. Just remember that you have to have broken firearms to practice on and they are not included. After this comes books. There are lots of gunsmithing books out there. Take your pick (although Brownell's has some really good ones, as does the NRA) and study, then PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!!! (Sounds familiar, doesn't it?)

Please be aware that, a full or part-time gunsmith, working for the general public will need a Federal Firearms License. Oh, the paperwork! It can be a help and a hindrance what with the fees, paperwork, and headaches. To work for yourself (or your friends under the table), you don't need it.

REFERENCES:

- (1) NRI Schools Home Study Course, Gunsmithing
- (2) NRA Book of Exploded Firearms Drawings

Helpful Addresses:

NRI Schools Washington, DC 20008

Brownell's Inc. 200 S. Front St. Montezuma, IA 50171 515-623-5401

B-Square Box 11281 Station C Fort Worth, TX 76109

American Gunsmith P.O. Box 420234 Palm Coast, FL 32142

(Technical Journal of Firearms Repair and Maintenance)

Best of Luck!

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