Your Personal Tool Kit

Skills · https://thejoinery.club/docs/skill-personal-tool-kit/

The short list of tools worth owning — and the much longer list the shop already covers.

Shared shop tools get used hard by a lot of hands. A chisel someone tapped into a hidden nail, a square that got dropped, a tape with a bent hook — none of it is anyone's fault, it is just what happens in a busy shop. A personal kit is not about duplicating the shop. It is the few items where trust and condition change the outcome of your work.

What the shop already provides

You do not need to buy any of this. It is here, it is maintained, and it is part of your membership:

- Jointer, planer, table saw, miter saw, bandsaw, drum sander, and dust collection
- Routers, router table, Festool Domino, track saw, drills and drivers
- Clamps in every size, assembly tables, and bench space
- Shared measuring and layout tools, sharpening equipment, and finishing supplies

Two tiers

- **Tier 1 — Get Started.** The cheapest option that still clears a real quality bar. The point of this tier is to start, not to optimize.
- **Tier 2 — Tools for Life.** Buy-once tools, better in ways you can feel: a square you never re-check, a chisel that holds an edge through a run of dovetails. Worth it only for the operations you have discovered you actually do.

What it costs

- **Tier 1 core kit** — about $188. Everything you need to take a class and start working.
- **Tier 1 complete** — about $239. Adds the card scraper and block plane.
- **The realistic path** — about $460. Tier 1 plus the three upgrades most people end up wanting.

- **Full Tier 2** — about $794. Very few people should start here.

> That middle row is the one I'd point at. Buy Tier 1, use it for six months, then upgrade only the two or three things you found yourself fighting. Nobody can tell you in advance which ones those will be — including me, and including you. There's no prize for spending more up front.
>
> *Steven*

Keep your tools yours

Mark every item with your name before it ever comes into the shop, and keep edge tools in sleeves or a roll. A $120 chisel and a $12 chisel go dull at exactly the same rate when they rattle around loose in a drawer.

Sharpening

A chisel is only as good as its last sharpening, which makes sharpening the first skill rather than an advanced one. The shop has the equipment and you are welcome to it, so you do not need to buy stones to get started. When a cut suddenly feels like work, the tool is telling you something — stop and sharpen. See Using a Cabinet Scraper for the scraper's version of the same lesson.

Download the guide

Prices were verified 1 August 2026. Treat them as accurate-on-the-day — the picks will outlast the prices.

Download Your Personal Tool Kit (PDF)

Stuck?

Open office hours run Wednesdays and Saturdays. Bring the project, bring the board, bring the question. If you are not sure whether to upgrade something, bring the tool you are fighting with.

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