

# SCREWDRIVERS & PLIERS

We pick the best tools for car DIY enthusiasts

PRODUCT GROUP TEST 16 | 07 | 2014

Every week, we extensively test all the latest car kit from tyres to trim cleaners. Log on to [www.autoexpress.co.uk](http://www.autoexpress.co.uk) to look through our huge online test archive.

**AE** Kim Adams  
SCREWDRIVERS and pliers are toolbox essentials, and you won't get far with DIY car maintenance without either one of them. The best way to buy is in sets. Pliers usually come in packs of combination and snipe nose versions, with diagonal cutters that will cover most general car jobs. Screwdriver line-ups are less consistent, with makers going their own way on size and choice. It's worth checking the screws on your car to see what you need if going for one of the smaller sets. In the first of our twin tool tests, we pick the top choices to make DIY servicing easy and cost-effective.



## How we tested them

COMFORT was vital for both tools, as it's key to applying force. For the 'drivers, we looked for slotted, Phillips and Pozidriv fasteners to be included. Points were also given for colour coding and magnetic tips. Finally, we factored in prices gathered from online sources. For the pliers, we also checked that they moved easily and resisted marking when grasping a bolt. Cutting power was tested on the diagonal cutters and combination pliers by tackling paper, tie wrap, wire coat hangers and electric cables.

## Auto Express Verdict

DRAPER hangs on to its screwdriver crown with its 20 Piece set taking a clear victory. The cost-effective Silverline is our favourite pliers set.

- Screwdrivers**
1. Draper 20 Piece Screwdriver Set
  2. Halfords Advanced Professional Screwdriver Set

- Pliers**
1. Silverline 3PC VDE Plier Set
  2. Draper 3 Piece Heavy Duty Pliers Set



### Draper 20 Piece General Purpose Screwdriver Set

Price: £34.24  
Contact: 023 8049 4333, [www.drapertools.com](http://www.drapertools.com)  
Flat/slotted: 6 Crosshead/Phillips: 3 Pozidriv/PZ: 3



### Halfords Advanced Professional Screwdriver Set

Price: £14.99  
Contact: 0845 057 9000, [www.halfords.com](http://www.halfords.com)  
Flat/slotted: 4 Crosshead/Phillips: 0 Pozidriv/PZ: 4



### Silverline Soft-Grip Screwdriver Set

Price: £11.84  
Contact: 01935 382222, [www.silverlinetools.com](http://www.silverlinetools.com)  
Flat/slotted: 3 Crosshead/Phillips: 0 Pozidriv/PZ: 3

THERE'S an odd mix of sizes in this Silverline set, with a handful of full-size tools combined with a good range of 10 precision screwdrivers. You get plenty for your money, but you can't help feeling some of the small sizes will rarely leave the toolbox. Build quality could be better, but the handles are comfortable, if slippery in oily hands.

Rating: ★★☆☆



### Siegen 7PC Electrician's Screwdriver Set

Price: £8.98  
Contact: 01284 757500, [www.sealey.co.uk](http://www.sealey.co.uk)  
Flat/slotted: 4 Crosshead/Phillips: 3 Pozidriv/PZ: 0

THERE was little to choose between the Silverline, Siegen and Kennedy sets, even though they're all really quite different. As the name suggests, these are aimed at the home, but they cover the common sizes in the ranges supplied. Naturally, insulation is good and the dual-compound rubber handles are grippy.

Rating: ★★☆☆



### Kennedy 'Hi-Grip' Screwdriver Set

Price: £26.18  
Contact: 0116 257 2431, [www.cromwell.co.uk](http://www.cromwell.co.uk)  
Flat/slotted: 4 Crosshead/Phillips: 3 Pozidriv/PZ: 3

WELL shaped, but hard, plastic handles do this set no favours. They don't work as well with greasy hands as some rivals. The tools cover the three key screws, but they're all at the hefty end of the scale. For car work, you're likely to have to invest in smaller tools as well. But you do get two stubbies, marked handles and hex drives.

Rating: ★★☆☆



### Clarke Pro Professional 8Pc Electrical Screwdriver Set

Price: £13.19  
Contact: 01992 565300, [www.clarkeinternational.com](http://www.clarkeinternational.com)  
Flat/slotted: 4 Crosshead/Phillips: 3 Pozidriv/PZ: 0

LIKE the Siegen set, these are aimed at electricians, rather than mechanics. Most sizes are car-friendly, though, and they're well insulated. Unlike the Siegen, though, the handles look like they've come from another generation, with sharp edges and tough to grip, hard plastic materials.

Rating: ★★☆☆

**BEST BUY** A SECOND win on the trot for this comprehensive set from Draper. It covers the three main screw heads, and you also get six TX Star tools in common car sizes. There's no problem finding what you want as they're colour-coded. Decent quality also makes this set a clear winner.

Rating: ★★★★★

**RECOMMENDED** A PRICE cut since our last test (and the current offer price of £10), helps this set to second. There's no Phillips 'drivers, but you do get two stubbies and a usable range. Quality is also above average, and its marked and colour-coded handles were our favourites on test.

Rating: ★★★★★



### Silverline 3PC VDE Plier Set

Price: £14.94  
Contact: 01935 382222, [www.silverlinetools.com](http://www.silverlinetools.com)



### Draper Expert 3 Piece Heavy Duty Pliers Set

Price: £24.18  
Contact: 023 8049 4333, [www.drapertools.com](http://www.drapertools.com)



**RECOMMENDED** If you want a case to hold your pliers and cutters, this is our pick. Out of the box the twin-compound rubber handles are comfortable and grippy. They were easy to use when stripping insulation, although the set was at its limit in some of the cutting tests. It provides a decent balance between price and performance.

Rating: ★★★★★



### Knipex Professional Pliers Set

Price: £44.95  
Contact: 023 8049 4333, [www.drapertools.com](http://www.drapertools.com)

IT'S hard to fault these sturdy tools, which breezed our assessments, chomping their way through the cutting tests with little effort. You can feel the quality the moment you grab the dual-compound handles, which are well shaped for applying pressure. If you can justify paying around £15 a tool, go for it – you won't regret it.

Rating: ★★★★★



### Kennedy Pro-Torq Plier Set

Price: £31.98  
Contact: 0116 257 2431, [www.cromwell.co.uk](http://www.cromwell.co.uk)

A PRICE hike since our last test doesn't help this Kennedy set. The tools are also a touch smaller than rivals here, although the pliers and cutters fared well in the tests. The small handles of the diagonal cutters meant applying force in the more difficult tests was hard. The plier jaws resisted marking well.

Rating: ★★☆☆



### Sealey 3PC VDE Approved Pliers Set

Price: £34.08  
Contact: 01284 757500, [www.sealey.co.uk](http://www.sealey.co.uk)

THESE VDE standard pliers had the most comfortable handles on test, with smooth edges and grippy inserts to help oily hands. Despite being able to apply plenty of pressure, others proved more adept in our cutting tests. The tools also had some resistance to full opening. A handy case justifies the relatively high price.

Rating: ★★☆☆



### Clarke 3PC Plier Set

Price: £6.59  
Contact: 01992 565300, [www.clarkeinternational.com](http://www.clarkeinternational.com)

IT'S hard to look past that cracking price when considering this Clarke trio. There's no doubt you'll get the job done with this set, but it may take longer as it struggled in our cutting tests. The hard, single-compound handles didn't help matters as they weren't the best for applying pressure. Fine if you are on a tight budget, but there are better options around.

Rating: ★★☆☆