

Products Ratchet spanners tested

TURNS FOR THE BETTER

A set of ratchet spanners makes car DIY quicker and easier. So we pick from 10 top buys

Auto Express GROUP TEST

THE Ratchet spanners are quicker and easier to use than conventional versions. Keep a set in your tool box, and you can work in tight spots in a fraction of the time as the spanner can be left on the fastener and turned in tiny movements – often as little as five degrees. These tools also

“Once you’ve used a ratchet spanner on your car, you’ll wonder how you managed without”

allow you to spin off nuts on long threads in no time. Ratchet spanner sets are generally more pricey than regular versions, so are more tool box desirables than essentials. However, once you’ve used one, you’ll wonder how you managed without. So which is the one to make your life easier? We got to grips with 10 top sets.

✓ How we tested them

RATCHET mechanisms aren’t as tough as solid metal, so quality is vital. With the help of the AA and engineer Rory Stockbridge, we took the 13mm and 17mm tools up to the British Standard 78lb/ft and 148lb/ft torque (right) for combination spanners.

We also checked for correct sizing on both ends of the 10, 13 and 17mm spanners. Comfort was a factor, plus we wanted to see the common 8, 10, 12, 13, 17 and 19mm sizes. Levers to change direction scored points, as did size and direction markings on both sides, plus storage. Finally, we looked at price per wrench.



Verdict

IT WAS very tight at the top of our test rankings, but Silverline just takes the victory thanks to its decent-quality finish and highly competitive pricing. Halfords scoops the runner-up spot, as its Advanced set has a massive range that will cover just about anything the DIY mechanic will need. Sealey’s Micro-Locking set combines quality and a good price to take the final podium place.

1. Silverline Fixed Head Ratchet Spanner Set
2. Halfords Advanced Professional Ratchet Set
3. Sealey Micro-Locking Combination Ratchet Wrench Set

Silverline Fixed Head Ratchet Spanner Set

Price: £24.40
Sizes: 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 17mm
Contact: 01935 382222
www.silverlinetools.com

BEST BUY

SOME of our spanners have slicker ratchets and smaller ends, but this Silverline set is all most DIY mechanics will ever need. And all at the lowest price here. Crucially, money hasn’t been saved on the bits that matter, so it passed all our torque and sizing tests. There are size and ratchet direction markings on both sides, too. The only thing missing is a 19mm wrench.

Rating: ★★★★★



Sealey Micro-Locking Combination Ratchet Wrench Set

Price: £57.58
Sizes: 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 17, 19mm
Contact: 01284 757500, www.sealey.co.uk

SEALEY completes our different budget options – this is a top-quality set, but smaller and cheaper than the Halfords (opposite). Like the Halfords, the 72-tooth ratchet is super slick and also uses rings working on the sides of the fasteners rather than the corners to reduce slipping. It flew through all our tests, although oddly just the 14mm had the desirable ratchet direction markings.

Rating: ★★★★★



Laser Ratchet Spanner Set

Price: £52.49
Sizes: 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19mm
Contact: 01926 818196, www.lasertools.co.uk

UNIQUELY here, this Laser set has flexible heads, giving more options for tackling hard-to-reach nuts and bolts. Despite the inherently weaker design, there were no problems in our tests and you could apply plenty of force to the thicker handles. We liked the tough, velcro-fastened tool roll, but would prefer to have seen an 8mm wrench instead of the 15mm.

Rating: ★★★★★



Halfords Advanced Professional Ratchet Set

Price: £79.99
Sizes: 8-19mm
Contact: 0845 762 6625, www.halfords.com

RECOMMENDED

TOP quality as we’ve come to expect from Halfords’ Professional tools and worth going for if you can afford it. The 12 spanners cover not just our essentials, but every size you’ll need. And while a tool roll might be more useful than the bulky hanging rack, you get one of the smoothest ratchet mechanisms on test. Our sizing and torque tests were no problem, either.

Rating: ★★★★★



Kennedy Ring Ended Ratchet Wrench Set

Price: £41.57
Sizes: 6-15, 17, 19, 21, 22mm
Contact: 0116 257 2431, www.cromwell.co.uk

BIT of a mixed bag from this Kennedy set, which covers 14 sizes in seven wrenches. It also has the desirable lever to switch rotation, so you don’t have to remove the wrench to change direction. But the ratchet is coarse and the heads big, plus the 17mm failed the strength test – albeit at a level you’d struggle to apply by hand. A good option to cover lots of fasteners.

Rating: ★★★★★



Kennedy Reversible Ratchet Combination Spanner Set

Price: £89.41
Sizes: 10-17, 19mm
Contact: 0116 257 2431, www.cromwell.co.uk

THERE’S a lot to like about this Kennedy set: the list has to be the thumb lever to switch direction, so you can keep the wrench on the nut. Plus, the 15-degree offset allows you to use when working against a flat surface. Sizes on both sides of the nine spanners, but with nothing less at this price.

Rating: ★★★★★



Teng Ratcheting Combination Spanner Set

Price: £118.43
Sizes: 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 19mm
Contact: 01525 711500, www.tengsupplies.com

ONE fractionally too small open end spanner stopped this otherwise top-quality set from finishing much higher. It’s the most expensive by some margin but you feel that in the matt-finished tools with polished open ends. There’s a slight offset to aid access and the direction change levers are great to use. Storage case insert can be used to slot into a tool box drawer.

Rating: ★★★★★



Draper Expert X-Torg Ratcheting Spanner Set

Price: £66.44
Sizes: 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19mm
Contact: 023 8049 4333, www.draper.co.uk

AS on the Teng (opposite), one oversize ring spoiled an otherwise good performance. The Draper is the only set with handles shaped so the largest side is against the palm when you apply pressure, and as they’re the longest tools on test, you can apply plenty. As well as being comfortable to use, they’re well finished and cover our essentials, but the ratchets run a little coarse.

Rating: ★★★★★



Clarke Pro Gearless Ratchet Combination Wrench Set

Price: £57.59
Sizes: 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 19mm
Contact: 01992 565300, www.clarkeinternational.com

RED felt-lined wooden storage case sets the Clarke Pro set apart from rivals here. That quality appeal is reinforced when you try the ultra-smooth-running, hex ring, toothless ratchets. Sadly, the 13mm tool wouldn’t run smoothly after the torque test, plus we’d like an 8mm instead of a 14mm spanner. Otherwise it’s a desirable set.

Rating: ★★★★★

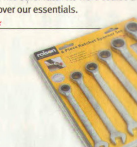


Rolson Ratchet Spanner Set

Price: £27.26
Sizes: 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 17mm
Contact: 01488 689400, www.saxon-brands.co.uk

BUDGET Rolson set really struggled in this. There’s no case, roll or holder and the drive end was too big and both 13mm and 17mm the torque tests – the smaller one at a level probably achieve by hand. Both were unusable. The other ratchets were coarse and didn’t cover our essentials.

Rating: ★★★★★



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