

Drilling and Driving

With new combination tools, it's no longer a full-day job

BY DAVID ASHINGURST



Six or seven years ago, it took four different drills to drive the screws for an armoire I was building. I had three drills chucked and ready—one with a pilot bit, another with a brad point for the counterbores and a third, a drywall screw gun, loaded to drive the screws home. And lost somewhere on the workbench was a cordless drill fitted with a countersink. In all the mess, my feet became ensnared in a tangle of extension cords, and I fell to the cement floor.

Since then, several systems have hit the market, and driving screws is no longer a wrist-wrenching, cord-consuming chore. The tools are designed to drill a pilot hole and countersink or counterbore in one stroke. The drill is then removed or swapped to reveal the driver bit. I have tried three of the more readily available systems that combine the drill and driver into one handy package.

The first one on the market was the Chuck-Mate, and its newfound convenience made it a tremendous success. Later, the Insty-Bit Quick Change system was introduced, and a similar QuickClick line from Snappy soon entered the fray. Now the snap-lock systems have taken driving screws to a new level of ease. The snap-lock setup I evaluated was Makita's Quad-Driver. Similar ones are available from Craftsman, Dewalt and others.

The Chuck-Mate and Insty-Bit systems require removing the drill and counterbore bit and setting it aside to use the driver. The snap-locks contain both the drill and driver in one manageable unit that is flipped end for end to change tools. I preferred the snap-locks because there are no parts to be set aside and possibly lost.

Although the Chuck-Mate is easy to use and drills the best counterbores, its tendency to wobble and vibrate has relegated it to my used drill bit drawer. If you're looking for versatility, Insty-Bit edges out the competition, provided you're willing to lay out a considerable sum for all hex-drive bits. It uses a Quick-Change chuck that, once fitted, allows you to change from one bit to another, chuck-free, in seconds. The snap-lock drivers are relatively inexpensive and easy to use. The simple fact that you don't have to use a different tool for drilling and driving has kept it locked in my cordless drill, easily the most used tool in my shop.

All the tools leave a bit of tearout at the counterbore. For furniture-grade work, where the counterbore will be plugged and visible under the finish, I still reach for a brad-point counterbore bit chucked in a drill. These tools haven't changed that. But for general construction or paint-grade work, any of these tools works well and saves time. And so far, I haven't wound up on the floor. □

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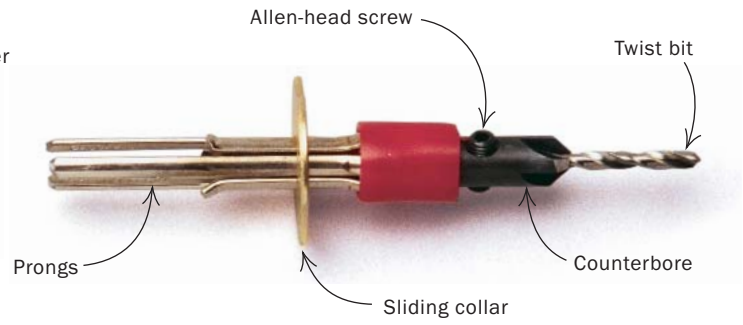
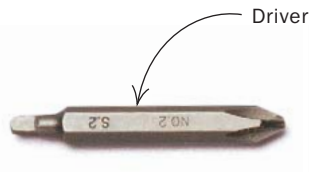
Chuck-Mate



PRICE: \$12.95

OPERATION: Friction fit

COUNTERBORE SIZES:
3/8 in., 1/2 in.



The prongs slide over the driver, which is chucked in the drill.



A disc is pulled down to hold the counterbore tightly in place.



The pilot hole and counterbore are made in one easy motion.



The sleeve is then removed and set aside to reveal the driver.

PROS: The Chuck-Mate is easy to use, and its counterbore cut the fastest and cleanest holes of the group. Although it comes in a wide assortment of drill bits for screws ranging from #3 through #12, I've used a #6 bit almost exclusively for years.

CONS: The friction fit that holds the bit to the driver has a tendency to vibrate loose when the bit is pulled from the work. The Chuck-Mate's drill bit is shortened to fit the tool, and any replacement may have to be modified. Another unnerving characteristic is its wobble. Although the wobble doesn't affect the quality of the hole, the action often made my drill vibrate like a palm sander. Also, an Allen wrench is not included.

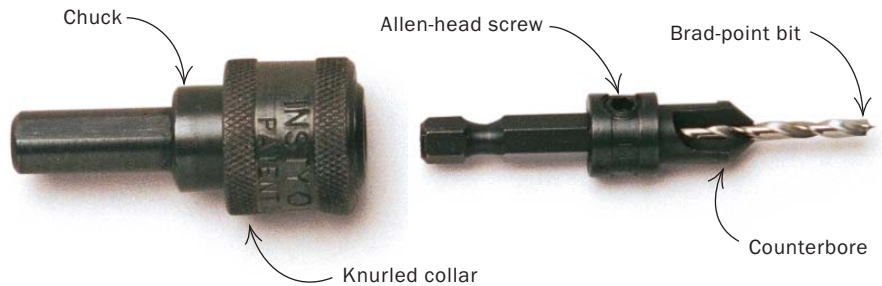
Insty-Bit



PRICE: \$10.95 for chuck
\$22.95 for set of five bits

OPERATION: Drill
swapped for driver

COUNTERBORE SIZES:
3/8 in., 1/2 in.



Bit locks into place with a detent on its shank.



Pilot hole and counterbore are both drilled in one stroke.



Bit is easily removed and replaced with a driver.



With the driver in place, the drill is readied for driving screws.

Insty-Bit offers a variety of tools that can be chucked in the 1/4-in. adapter. Among them is an extension sleeve (third from right) that enables you to use the pilot and counter-bore bit without removing the driver.



PROS: Of all the tools tested, the Insty-Bit ran the smoothest and offered the widest variety of options. Its 1/4-in. chuck fits all 1/4-in. tools with a detent on the end of their shafts. There was little or no runout, and the positive-locking chuck worked well and consistently. It is also the only one to offer a brad-point bit for drilling the pilot hole. To minimize chuck operations, Insty-Bit has developed an extension sleeve that fits over its hex drills.

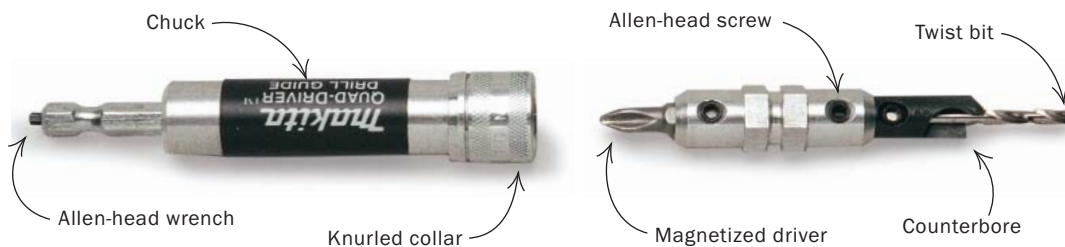
CONS: Insty-Bit is advertised as a one-handed tool, but I never mastered the art without dropping the bit. The chuck required two hands to operate—one to hold the chuck ring in position, the other to swap bits. (The company was working on a locking-sleeve prototype as this article was being written.) Also, the counterbore has only two cutters. The deep gullets reduced clogging, but the edge of the counterbored hole required sanding to remove the inevitable burrs. The extension sleeve is a good idea, but in action, it is heavy, long and it wobbles excessively.

Snap-lock

PRICE: \$25 to \$40, depending on brand and options

OPERATION: Tool flipped for either drill or driver

COUNTERBORE SIZES: 9/32 in., 11/32 in., 3/8 in., 7/16 in.



Various tool companies offer these new snap-lock tools, including Makita and Dewalt.



One unit combines the pilot bit, counterbore and driver.



The bit unit is flipped to expose a driver on the other end.



A magnetized driver holds the screw and sinks it home.

PROS: Unlike the other systems that relied on a loose wrench, the snap-locks have a built-in Allen wrench on the end of the tool. Having the proper tool in a permanent and accessible location is handy. It has a positive locking chuck and produced minimal runout. A magnetized driver eased the chore of driving screws.

CONS: The counterbores come in odd diameters, running from 9/32 in. to 7/16 in., with only one being 3/8 in. dia. With only one small cutter on the counterbore, these bits clogged the most, and often. They had to be cleaned following every hole drilled.

