

FROM THE EDITORS OF

Fine Homebuilding & Fine Woodworking

Gift Ideas from \$20 to \$100

2008

TAUNTON'S

# TOOL GUIDE



## 365 tools tested

Buying tips • Editors' picks  
Readers' ratings



\$9.99 (Canada \$11.99)



Taunton Product #015005



DISPLAY UNTIL MARCH 31



# 23-gauge Pin Nailers

They fire nails that barely leave a trace

The typical 23-ga. pin nailer is light and maneuverable, and narrow-gauge pins allow you to fasten delicate moldings without splitting the wood. Plus, the nail holes are so tiny that one coat of paint makes them nearly invisible. If you're using a clear coat, you can hide the pins between moldings or use a tiny amount of wood putty. Likewise, woodworkers use pins to attach face frames and solid-wood edging almost invisibly.

Some of the pinner we tested were better than others. Don't buy an expensive gun that can fire 2-in. pins if most of your work can be done with a less-expensive gun that fires 1-in. to 1½-in. pins. If you want to spend the extra money, put it toward a gun that can shoot both headless pins and slight-head brads, which offer increased holding power. Look for a gun that has oversize slots in the track to show the number of remaining pins or that includes an anti-dry-fire feature so that you don't think you're firing pins when you're really just shooting air. □

Gary Striegler contributed to this article.



**NIKLE NS2340**  
\$220; www.nikletools.com

**EDITORS' CHOICE**  
**BEST OVERALL**

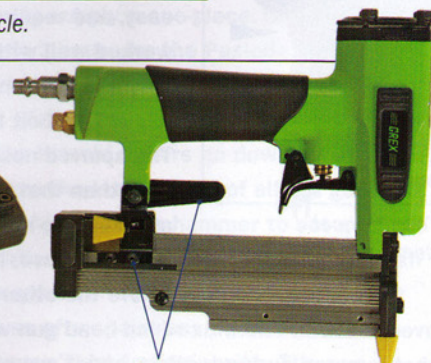
**One of two guns tested that fire both 23-ga. pins and 23-ga. slight-head brads**  
This pinner holds two racks of headless pins or slight-head brads in lengths up to 1¾ in. and is certainly the most compact tool with such a large capacity. Headless pins are not for every application, and we like to have the option of using this tool to fire slight-head brads rather than swapping it out for an 18-ga. brad nailer. The Nikle has an adjustable air exhaust and a nice long nosepiece to get into tight places. Our only complaints with this gun are that it doesn't have an anti-dry-fire feature and that there's just a small hole to check how many pins remain. Still, the Nikle has a nearly ideal combination of size, weight, capacity, and power.



**BOSTITCH HP118K**  
\$120; www.bostitch.com

**EDITORS' CHOICE**  
**BEST VALUE**

**Good basic features for a great price**  
Unlike a few of the other models in this price range, the Bostitch comes with a sturdy carrying case and 1,500 pins to get you started. It holds two full racks of pins up to 1¾ in. in length, which is adequate for most jobs, and doesn't incorporate a lot of extra features that are seldom used. The pinner has a long nosepiece to get into tight places and an adjustable power level meant to eliminate fussing with the compressor. We never needed to turn down the power. The only complaints were minor: The viewing slot in the track is a bit too small, and the trigger safety is a bit too large. The latter might seem like a good thing, but after a while, it can wear on your trigger finger and become uncomfortable.



Onboard storage for jam-clearing wrench

**GREX P635**  
\$198; www.grexusa.com

**READERS' CHOICE**

**A convenient belt hook, but lower-than-average nail capacity**  
This pinner can drive pins from ¾ in. to 1¾ in. in length, but Grex recently released a model that shoots 1¾-in. pins as well (model P645; \$290). We appreciated the onboard wrench for clearing infrequent jams—much more convenient than a wrench that rides in the carrying case. This is the first pinner we tried that has a pivoting belt hook. Like the pocket on a shirt, most people won't need it all the time, but it can come in handy. This pinner was a close second for best overall; it fell short because it can't shoot slight-head brads and because it holds fewer pins than the Nikle.