

DeWalt DC628 15-Gauge Cordless Finish Nailer

by Derrell Day

Any worthwhile 15-gauge finish nailer should meet four essential criteria: It should have the power to sink nails in any common trim material; it should have an adjustable depth-of-drive; it shouldn't jam; and it should be capable of firing nails as fast as the user wants to work — meaning that it should bump-fire without making the user wait between shots.

When I tested cordless finish nailers a couple of years ago (see "Cordless Finish Nailers," 4/05), only one 15-gauge cordless gun was available: Senco's AirFree 41. The tool was a disappointment, mostly because its long windup made bump-fire nailing impossible.

Now DeWalt has introduced a 15-gauge version of its DC618 16-gauge nailer. Since I've had good experiences with the older gun, I figured the new one — the DC628 — would be a worthy candidate for testing.

Operation

The DC628 has a comfortable nonslip grip and a tough plastic housing (which was severely tested by several significant drops). Filling its 34-degree rear-loading magazine is easy. The magazine holds up to 110 DA nails in lengths from 1¼ to 2½ inches. I like that the nails are clearly visible, so you can easily see when it's time for a reload. When the gun's empty, it stops firing.



Powered by DeWalt's XRP series 18-volt battery, the nailer can drive 720 nails in a single charge, according to the company. DeWalt didn't specify the material or length of nail, but we found we could get nearly an entire day's work out of a fully charged pack. Getting the battery back up from total discharge takes 45 minutes to an hour. Unlike most cordless tools, which begin to wind down when they're ready for a recharge, the DC628 stops cold. Either it's working, driving nails to their desired depth, or it's ready for the charger. We liked that.

A mode switch on the main housing between the trigger and the magazine lets the user switch easily from sequential to bump-fire mode. The toggle was a little awkward to operate, but we didn't feel the need to change modes much anyway. Bump-fire is the norm for us, and we found the gun easy to control in all applications. The manufacturer's specs claim a nailing

DC628 18-Volt Cordless Finish Nailer

Weight:	8.8 pounds
Length:	12.5 inches
Height:	13.8 inches
Nail type:	15-gauge, 34-degree DA
Nail length:	1¼ to 2½ inches
Magazine:	Rear load; 110-nail capacity
Street price:	\$350

Kit contains nailer, one-hour charger, 18-volt battery, safety glasses, and molded case

DeWalt
800/433-9258
www.dewalt.com

Toolbox | DeWalt DC628 15-Gauge Cordless Finish Nailer



The 15-gauge nailer has enough power to countersink nails in just about any common trim material. A six-position thumb-wheel on the side of the housing controls depth-of-drive (far left), and a small toggle between the trigger and magazine selects sequential or bump-fire mode (left).

rate of four to five nails per second, which is faster than we ever need.

The easily accessible depth-setting wheel's six numbered settings allow the operator to match the depth-of-drive to a particular material and task.

Weight

Like the 16-volt DC618, the DC628 is heavy — 8.8 pounds. That sounds especially hefty compared with the weight of an air-powered finish gun — but such comparisons are fair only if you add in the weight of unsupported air hose. We found the heft acceptable, though overhead work got tiring after a while. All the testers on my crew commented on the weight, but felt that the balance of the gun offset any concern. “Comfortable to use” was a phrase I heard repeatedly.

Features

The nailer comes with an attached no-mar pad; a spare pad is stored at the base of the magazine. A tool-free, flip-back nosepiece makes clearing jams a snap. We dealt with very few jams during our tests anyway, and none were the fault of the nailer.

At first glance, the two LED lights —



A hinged driver housing secured with a draw-catch makes clearing jammed nails easy. The contact foot has a no-mar rubber pad; a spare is stored on the magazine.

one on each side of the gun's main housing — struck us as a little cheesy, but we were too quick to judge. These small lights are perfect for reading a level inside a closet, or for any of those other situations where you need to see just a bit better. They stay on for about 10 seconds after the trigger is pulled.

Although the DC628's reversible belt hook was handy when we were running trim from a ladder or scaffold, the gun's significant weight meant that we had to tighten our belts an extra notch when we used it — and the tool's large head left

scuff marks on several doorways and cased openings.

A feature that DeWalt calls a Contact Trip Lock-Off disables the gun's firing mechanism when somebody holds the trigger for extended periods. At one point we nearly gave up on the gun when it wasn't working. Fortunately, someone actually broke out the owner's manual and diagnosed the problem.

The Verdict

When we received our test gun, we were in the process of installing trim and

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Brazilian cherry flooring in a large home. The house proved to be the perfect test environment, because we were constantly moving from room to room doing punch-out. In such circumstances, it's really nice not to have to set up a compressor or drag out air hose.

The entire time we used it, the gun never failed to countersink a nail — even in oak stair treads. All in all, we think this gun meets our criteria for a worthwhile 15-gauge cordless nailer.

The DC628K — which includes a battery, a one-hour charger, and a carrying case — sells for about \$350. You can also find reconditioned versions on the Web



The DC628 comes in a molded plastic case with room for a variety of nails, the charger, and a spare 18-volt battery. Sturdy by modern standards, the case has a molded piano hinge and metal draw catches.

for \$210. As with any cordless tool, a second battery (\$50 to \$75) is essential for job-site applications.

Derrell Day owns Day Construction in Panama City, Fla.

To-Go Pack. With a noise rating of 75 decibels, the *CAP1516 TrimAir* is about as loud as a household vacuum cleaner, says its maker. The 1.6-gallon unit weighs less than 20 pounds and can deliver 1.8 cfm at 90 psi. A wraparound plastic housing — with built-in handle and cord wrap for easy transport — protects the regulator, pressure switch, and gauge. The machine sells for about \$180.

Bostitch, 800/556-6696, www.bostitch.com.



Air Supremacy. Reliable and quiet, Thomas's Renegade compressors are a popular breed among contractors. Despite its diminutive size, *Model T-635HT* — the company's newest version — delivers 1.7 cfm at 100 psi, meaning it can support one framing nailer or two finish nailers. It weighs 27 pounds, draws only 6 amps, and operates at 69 decibels. I found one on the Web for \$343.

Thomas, 800/558-7721, www.thomasairpac.com.



Little Huffer. It may not seem like a big deal to some users, but I sure appreciate the sturdy ball-valve tank drain on DeWalt's Emglo compressors. At 24 pounds, the *D55140* is the company's lightest, most portable model. It provides .75 cfm at 90 psi. In addition to the quarter-turn drain valve, it has a built-in roll cage, top-mounted controls, and a cord wrap. According to the manufacturer, it draws 2.6 amps and operates at 69 decibels. It costs about \$180.

DeWalt, 800/433-9258, www.dewalt.com.



Small Impact. Manufactured with a white housing (a departure from the company's traditional blue-green hue), the *BTD142HW* impact driver is part of Makita's Compact line of cordless tools. Weighing a mere 2.8 pounds and measuring less than 6 inches in length, the 18-volt driver provides up to 1,280 inch-pounds of torque. Even more impressive is the price: For \$220, you get the tool, two 1.5 amp-hour batteries, and a case.

Makita, 800/462-5482, www.makita.com.



Heavy Hitter. Think back to your first cordless drill. At the time, did you believe it would ever be possible to drill concrete efficiently with cordless technology? Bosch's 36-volt lithium-ion powered *11536VSR* rotary hammer is rated for one-inch holes with a conventional bit and for 2 1/2-inch holes with a core bit.

It has all the features found on its corded brethren, including 2.2 pounds of impact force, a multiposition bit holder, and a torque-arresting clutch. You can find it on the Web for about \$600.

Bosch, 877/267-2499, www.boschtools.com.



Power Up. Hitachi says its 14.4-volt *DV14DL* (\$260) weighs about the same as a 9.6-volt cordless drill yet boasts 460 inch-pounds of torque and a hammer function. Powered by the company's newly introduced 14.4-volt lithium ion platform, the kit includes two 3.0 amp-hour battery packs (which are compatible with older 14.4-volt Hitachi tools).

The new 14.4-volt lithium ion line also contains a nonhammer cordless drill (*DS14DL*; \$240) and two impact drivers (*WR14DL* and *WH14DL*; \$260 each).

Hitachi, 800/706-7337, www.hitachipowertools.com.

