

Reliable Metal Connector Nailer

Duo-Fast DF150S-TC
ITW
888/386-3278
www.itwindfast.com
Street price: \$320



Over the years, I've used a number of metal-connector nailers. Some just work better than others, getting the nails into the holes and sinking them to the proper depth. That's the category the Duo-Fast DF150S-TC falls into. It's fast and simple to load. The probe that locates the nail in the fastener hole is easily seen. Even when the tool isn't dead-on square to the connector, the vast majority of nails still end up where they're supposed to.

I don't know if this is function of the nailer or Duo-Fast's nails, but on the few occasions I fired a nail that missed the hole, I was amazed to find that the errant nail never ricocheted off the hardware. Rather, it was driven partway through the steel. I've never seen another metal-connector nailer do this. And in fact, on one

occasion with another nailer, a ricocheting nail ended up in the back of my left hand. For this reason alone, I'd consider buying this nailer.

I do have two complaints with the DF150S-TC. First, it only drives 1½-inch nails, so it's useless for shear nailing joist hangers. (On the other hand, hammering home a few 10d shear nails goes quickly and keeps a deck builder's nailing skills from completely atrophying.)

Second, it's a pricey tool. When asked about that, Duo-Fast's representative responded that the tool is made in America, and that it "is by far the most durable tool in its category." I didn't use it long enough to develop an opinion about the tool's durability, but I can say it does have a solid feel, and it operated flawlessly the entire time I used it. — *Andy Engel*

Versatile Decking Clamp

The Lightning Clamp
American Bolt Co. (U.S. distributor)
512/443-8521
adwizards.com/ambolt/
Street price: \$60

The Australian-made Lightning Clamp comes with just the clamp heads — you need to add a piece of ½-inch threaded rod to complete the tool. The advantage of this is that the size of the clamp is limited only by the length of the rod. For clamping decking, use shorter rod. But if you want to tweak some joists or the tops of a couple of newels closer, use longer rod. Should you need a really big clamp, the tool comes with a long



coupling nut for joining multiple threaded rods together. With shorter rod, it can push as well as pull.

If you've ever spun a nut onto a piece of threaded rod, you know that getting the nut to move any distance is ridiculously tedious. To avoid this trouble, a quick-release opens the threaded portion of the Lightning Clamp's handle, allowing it to slide on the threaded rod until it's close to where you want to begin clamping.

The clamp comes with two heads — one is just a hook for use on decking,

while the other is a larger, octagonal piece of steel for occasions when you want a larger clamping surface.

One disadvantage of the Lightning Clamp is that you have to be right down at the level of the decking to use it. Some competing clamps allow you to work standing up, which is great if you're using an autofeed screw gun that also works from the standing position. But a lot of us still screw decking down working on our knees. From that position, the Lightning Clamp is a great choice. — *A.E.* ♦