

BY CHRIS ERMIDES



Tested: Festool TXS Compact Cordless Drill

I've been testing the Festool 10.8-volt TXS cordless drill for the past few months, and I have to admit to being pleasantly surprised by its design and performance. I was a little skeptical of this particular model because at first it felt lightweight—especially for its \$235 price tag (\$285 with a right-angle chuck). Once I began putting it to work, however, I quickly learned that this drill—as small and compact as it is—means serious business.

After using the TXS for a short while, it became my go-to drill/driver for many tasks. I really like the weight (only 2 pounds!), balance, power, and precision of the drill. It fits nicely into my Occidental Framers pouch, and having three interchangeable heads (a quick-change “Centrotec” head,

a keyless chuck, and a right-angle chuck) meant I only needed one tool with me at all times. I even used the tool for setting plaster washers into 165-year-old ceiling joists, and for this task, it was able to keep up with its more powerful, 15-volt counterpart—the Festool C15.

The TXS was designed for much finer work, though. The two speed settings (low: 0 to 400; high: 0 to 1,200) and 12 clutch settings (with a torque range of 1.7 to 30.09 inch-pounds) offered awesome control for every application—it won't strip screws in cabinet-grade plywood, for example.

I used it most often for pocket-hole joinery, installing cabinet and door hinges and drawer glides, and for cabinet installations. It set 2 1/2-inch screws through 3/4-inch

plywood into studs without effort. The drill was great for setting electrical outlets and switches, as well. The variable-speed trigger has a soft actuation, but was still firm enough to maintain even slower speeds without losing the right “touch.” The 3/8-inch keyless chuck accepts 1/32-inch to 3/8-inch drill bits and worked as expected on poplar, maple, and oak stock.

The LED light, which is located at the base of the tool just above the battery, seemed at first to be dimmer than I wanted, but I quickly found it perfectly bright for even the darkest nooks—like in the back of a cabinet. It throws light from the bottom of the tool, though, casting a shadow beyond the work area. I find any light that's located on the bottom of a tool to be

Photos above and on facing page by Chris Ermides

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annoying for that reason, but that's a minor criticism of this drill. (That said, I wish that drill manufacturers would develop an adjustable work light—one that you can spin around just like a torque setting dial—because where you need the light depends on how you're holding the drill and where you're working.)

Of the three interchangeable heads, the Centrotec chuck is the one users will probably use most often. It's a quick-change system that accepts only Festool's proprietary bits. Removing the Centrotec chuck offers added versatility; the drill accepts all bits or bit holders. The Centrotec chuck design does lend itself to smoother driving of screws because it holds the bit in two places rather than one, and it holds the bit at a higher point on the shaft, so there is less maneuverability when it spins. I compared this with other drills that I have and while it wasn't a scientific test, I did notice a difference in the play when a bit spun in the Centrotec chuck vs. other drivers in my shop.

The base of the tool holds up to four bits in magnetic slots. I liked the idea of this feature, but found it cumbersome, as my hand inevitably knocked the bits out of their slots. I prefer keeping a small case of assorted bits with me at all times anyway, so onboard bit storage has never been important to me for any drill or driver I've owned.

The fuel gauge shows in the same window

as the LED light in a series of up to three green lights. It's possible to engage the trigger (without turning the drill on) to switch on the light briefly and check the status of the battery. The LED light turns on only when the trigger is depressed, which works fine.

I often use drills left-handed, so I appreciated the location of the forward/reverse button, which is high enough that you won't accidentally trip it with the natural grip, but convenient enough to quickly set without having to change your hand's position. It also locks in the middle setting, so if you throw it into your pouch, you don't have to worry about it accidentally running and depleting the battery.

If you're considering purchasing this drill and foresee a potential need for the right-angle attachment, I recommend forking over the extra \$50 and going all out at \$285 to get it. You can buy similar attachments for about \$20, but this head is compact, and it accepts the keyless chuck and Centrotec heads. You may not use it often, but when you do, you'll be glad you have it. I used it a couple of times when assembling cabinets. While it can be a little awkward at first (as any right-angle attachment can be), the convenience of being able to run a screw or drill bit in at an odd angle is nice to have.

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The Centrotec quick-change chuck holds Festool's proprietary bits and makes for a smoother rotation of the bit by gripping it in two places—the bottom and the middle of the shaft (above). Smoother rotation translates into more precise control. Add to that the benefits of a light weight, a firm trigger, and 12 torque settings, and you have enough control that you won't spin out screws in 1/2-inch VC plywood (above left).

Festool TXS Specs

Battery: 10.8 volts / 2.6 Ah Li-ion

Chuck capacity: 1/32 inch to 3/8 inch

Motor: DC

RPM: 0 to 400 (low);
0 to 1,200 (high)

Torque range: 1.7 to 30.09 inch-pounds

Weight: 1.98 pounds

Cost: TXS Plus (drill, two batteries, charger, Centrotec chuck, keyless chuck, bit, bit holder, Systainer case), \$235; TXS Set (TXS Plus kit and right-angle chuck), \$285

COO: Germany



Stepladder Turned To Small Staging

The top step of a stepladder might seem to some folks to be a design flaw: Why have a step that's dangerous to use? Traditional ladders also limit your range of motion in relation to the work area; you can reach only so far when standing on a narrow step. With Werner's new ladders, those limitations don't exist—you can stand on the top step and reach in any direction from the top of Werner's Podium Ladder. This relatively new-style stepladder line features a broad platform and a waist-high guard rail. Factory-installed spring-loaded casters, available on select models, deactivate automatically when the ladder is in use. These casters are available on the heavy-duty, 375-pound-rated Type IAA model, and on the 300-pound-rated Type IA fiberglass model. The Grade 1 Type IAA PD7303 series (shown) starts at \$260 for a 3-foot model. wernerco.com —C.E.



Load Ladders Effortlessly

Many work vehicles are so tall you would need to stand on one ladder to load another ladder on top. This is hardly ideal, which is why many companies offer racks that tilt down from the side of a box truck or van. Gentili came at the problem from a completely different direction: The G2000 rack loads from the rear, sliding out like a drawer slide and then pivoting down on gas pistons. The ladder can be strapped to (or unstrapped from) the rack, tilted up, and pushed forward until it locks into position. With this system, you barely have to lift the ladder off the ground to get it into the rack. Gentili has been selling the G2000 Ladder Rack in Europe for nearly 20 years. It's currently distributed in the U.S. by Inlad and is available online at inlad.com. Cost: \$1,900 plus shipping. —C.E.