Artillery Tools Demolition Tool System

by Mike Guertin

Demolition, dismantling, deconstruction—however you phrase the chore, it's a big part of the remodeling and replacement industries. And pros know the smashing, crashing, and sledgehammer wielding on construction entertainment programs is just for show. We have to be thoughtful in our approach and have the right tools to work efficiently and safely. Over the years, I've accumulated dozens and dozens of prying and demolition tools—various types of flat bars and crowbars for general work, along with tools that are more specialized to remove decking, pull embedded nails, or strip roofing. Loading up the right ones for a project can be hit or miss. There's always a tool back at the shop that I need.

Artillery Tools demolition sets make mobilizing for the deconstruction phase simple. They have a series of multi-function blades and heads of different shapes that can be configured with fulcrums for the best angle of attack and with handles and extensions for the right length and leverage. It only takes a minute to screw one of the 10 blades to one of the four fulcrums. Then a handle or handle-extension combination threads onto the fulcrum to customize the assembly. The configurations are almost endless.

Fulcrums Connect Handles to Blades

There are four fulcrums—standard, scraping, mini, and decking. The standard fulcrum sets up the blade-to-handle angle at roughly 45 degrees. We threaded it to a handle with an extension and various width blades to pry up wood and laminate flooring and tile backer board. The scraping fulcrum lowers the handle's angle of attack to about 22 1/2 degrees. We used it when working close in prying siding off walls. The decking and drywall fulcrum positions the handle at 90 degrees to the blade shank. And the mini fulcrum pairs with a mini blade—it's a simple and lightweight setup.

The fulcrums are 1 3/8 to 1 1/2 inches wide. When using the wide blades, I find that sometimes the tool rocks sideways, but the rocking can be stabilized by adding fulcrum extensions for a 3-inch footprint on the standard and decking fulcrums. Toe-kick bars, 1 inch by 3 1/2 inches long, can be added to the fulcrums so you can kick the blade deeper under materials.

Assortment of Blades

There are 10 sizes of blades, from 3/4 inch to 8 inches wide, and special-function blades. All but the 3/4-inch-wide blade have nail slots in the center. The 1 3/8-inch-wide spike puller has a wider and deeper nail slot. The 8-inch-wide blade has slots spaced an inch apart, and its leading edge is ground sharp, so it works well at prying up roofing and pulling out nails.

The U-shaped decking and drywall removal blade has a 2-inch space between blades to straddle a joist or stud. It can be used with the standard fulcrum for prying into the decking boards from the joist side or with the deck fulcrum when you're standing on the decking side. The center space and both blades have nail-puller slots so you can clear the remaining nails

Here, the Artillery Tools kit has been fitted with the deck and drywall fulcrum, the U-shaped removal blade, and both a 12-inch handle extension and a 25-inch handle.

The fulcrums, which determine the angle of attack, can be fitted with different blades (above, from left to right): scraping; mini; standard; deck and drywall.

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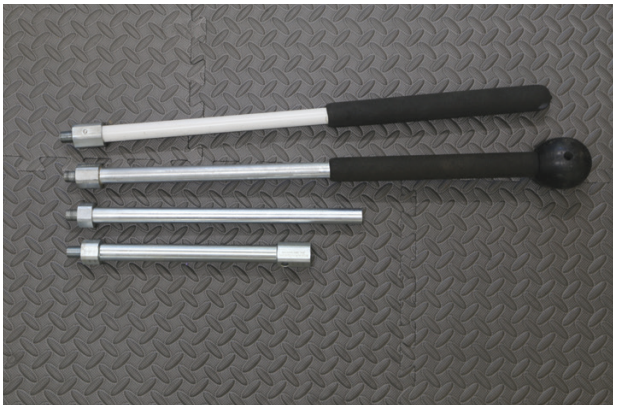
The salvage blade is useful for stripping siding (above left). Other blades include (above right, top row) finish nails; salvage; decking; 8-inch; and (bottom row) 3/4-inch; 1 3/4-inch; spike puller; 3-inch; 6-inch; and buried nail-head puller.



The standard, 25-inch-long steel handle (at top in photo, above left) can be fitted with a ball grip and shorter extensions for more comfort and better leverage. Specialty heads like this nail puller (above right) screw directly onto the handle.

and screws without having to grab a separate tool and make a second pass.

The finish nail and stapler blade has a center probe with a slot to slip under and trap the crown of standard 16-gauge staples so both legs come out at the same time. And two different sized slots on either side of the probe grab smaller shank and smaller headed nails.

We used the salvage blade to strip shingles and old lap siding off a couple of projects. It has a 3 1/2-inch-wide by 3-inch-deep footprint and beveled edges on three sides. The left corner is clipped at 45 degrees and the right corner is curved. The beveled edges and corners make it easy to plunge and slide the tool under siding and trim from any angle.

Handles and Specialty Heads

The standard steel handle is 25 inches long with a 12-inch cushioned grip. Two handle extensions—12 and 15 inches—can be used with the handle or separately for short-length tool outfitting. A lighter weight, 25-inch fiberglass handle is also available. A 2 1/2-inch-diameter plastic ball grip can be screwed onto the steel handle and extensions to make driving the bar forcefully under roofing, siding, and flooring much more comfortable than it is with just the handle or end cap.

There are specialty heads, too. The heavy, nail-pulling cat's-paw-shaped head threads to any length handle or extension (no fulcrum needed) for more leverage than you get from most pullers. The rebar bender head handles up to #5 bar.

Task-Specific Sets

Artillery pry bars are sold individually or in sets with blades, fulcrums, and bars geared towards different user groups and general tasks. The Professional Demolition set is the entry-level kit ($265 at artillerytools.com), while the Disaster Restoration set is the top-of-the-line kit ($610). You can also buy components separately, so you can add parts to your kit or outfit a crew from one set plus a few extra fulcrums and bars. ❖

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