

Buying Guide: Nailers and staplers



Nailers and staplers: versatile and essential tools for your toolbox!

The first “modern” stapler was manufactured in 1934, and the first nail gun, 20 years later in 1954. Also known as nail guns and staple guns, nailers and staplers are utilized to fasten or hold parts or materials together. Here a little reminder on how they work: nails or staples, bought in strips or coils, are loaded into the stapler or nailer’s magazine. The hammering force comes from using either compressed air (pneumatic), a spring or an electromagnetic field (electric) to fire the staples and nails.

Being extremely useful and versatile, the nailers and staplers can make construction projects and craft significantly simpler and faster, thus, increasing the productivity with less strain and efforts.

If you are thinking about getting a brand new nailer or stapler, look at our complete buying guide that will tell you everything you need to know about [nailers and staplers](#).

What do I need a stapler or nailer for?

Before you buy your stapler or nailer, you need ask yourself a few questions:

- What job do you need it for: framing, upholstery, assembling and finishing, shingling a roof?
- Where will the tool be used: In a garage, in a workshop, on a construction site, around the house, or in a business?
- Is noise a major factor to consider?
- How often will the staplers and nailers will be utilized?

How do nailers and staplers work?

Nailers and staplers work with compressed air, electromagnetism, gas or a spring, to drive nails and staples, charged in coils and strips, for robust, high-speed fastening of materials. Nail guns and staple guns have one of these two types of trigger mechanisms:

- **Contact trip (or continuous firing):** This mechanism allows the user to “bump fire” staples and nails simple by pressing the nose of the tool against the surface while holding down the trigger. This technique is extremely useful for production-type work (such as shingling a roof). This “bump nailing” mechanism takes some time to get used to. Indeed, the tool can drive two fasteners if the user doesn’t life it fast enough. Also, accidental contact can end up in unintended nail discharge or ricochet.
- **Sequential trip (or intermittent) firing:** This mechanism requires the user to first press the nose of the gun against the nailing surface and then pull the trigger. To drive a second nail, the user lifts the tool, releases the trigger, and then repeats the above sequence. This technique is the safer of the two

There are many models of nailers that come with both triggers. This approach allows the user to choose the one he finds the most appropriate for his project. Only a few models offer only one or the other mechanisms.

Staplers work mostly in the same way. However, some specialized tools, such as the upholstery stapler, work just like a standard hand stapler: squeezing the trigger fires the staple. However, a flooring stapler needs a mallet or hammer to strike the firing pad and drive the staple in.

Stapler and nailer types

If you are not sure about the type of nailer or stapler that you need, here is an overview of the models available on the market in order to make an informed choice.

Type of tool	Description	Application
<p>Stapler</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fastens materials using staples. • A staple is a two-pronged fastener. The crown (horizontal part) ensures strong placement and prevents the staple from sinking into the material too deeply. • Various models of staplers drive staples of different lengths, ranging from 1/2" to 2". • Specialty tools: small, special-purpose pneumatic staplers are available for fastening vinyl siding and upholstery work. • Utilizes strip refills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For hobbies and crafts, to repair or assemble wood pieces, such as drawers, cupboards, boxes and crates. • For areas that are out of sight or when appearance is unimportant.
<p>Stapler/Nailer</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fastens finishing nails and staples from 5/8" to 2", depending on the model. • Uses strip refills. • Extremely polyvalent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perfect for stapling thin pieces of wood, such as drawer bottoms, to keep glued parts together, and for nailing baseboards, moldings and trim. Also for finishing a cladding or panelling project. • For sustained performance, it is recommended to use the nailer and the stapler equally often. Using only the nailer can unbalance the drive mechanism. • The drive mechanism may leave marks on either side of the nails since it is also intended for staples. Make sure you adjust the nose angle to reduce markings. The marks can be concealed once the finishing has been done.
<p>Micro-Pin Nailer</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can fire 1/2" to 1 3/8" 23-gauge headless pin nails, so tiny there is no need to mask the holes. • Uses strip refills. • Strips can contain up to 120 pin nails. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideal for small craft projects or finishing work, such as keeping a narrow cabinet molding in place while the glue dries. • It can happen that pin nails don't often provide a solid hold. Therefore, they are used in combination with glue.
<p>Finish Nailer</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish nailers are available in various sizes and capacities. Some use nails ranging from 5/8" to 2", while others use 1" to 2 1/2" nails. • Uses strip refills. Certain specialty nailers have an angled magazine to be able to work in tight corners and driving nails diagonally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish nailers are perfect for installing all types of trim from baseboards to moldings. They can also be used to make furniture, doing home repairs, and wherever headless nails are called for.
<p>Framing Nailer</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremely powerful tool • Can easily sink 2" to 3 1/2" framing nails (with head). • Fitted with angled strip loader or coil loader. • A serrated nose tip offers a positive and comfortable grip on the nailing surface. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specially made for tough jobs. • Strip nailers are perfect for house and deck framing tasks because they are narrower and easier to use in tight spaces between joists and studs. • Coil nailers can hold more nails than strip nailers, which makes them suitable for building palettes or assembling parts on a jig.

<p>Roofing Nailer</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made for tough jobs. • Strip nailers are perfect for house and deck framing tasks because they are narrower and so easier to use in tight spaces between joists and studs. • Coil nailers can hold more nails than strip nailers. This makes them suitable for building palettes or assembling parts on a jig. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roofing nailers are made for roofing jobs only. There are not suitable for other types of work, given that roofing nails are specifically manufactured for attaching shingles and tiles.
<p>Siding Nailer</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifically designed for fastening outdoor siding with ¼" to 2 ½" siding nails. • Made with lightweight materials for easy manoeuvrability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not suitable for any other jobs. • Pre-painted nails are available on request to match the colour of the siding. • A stapler/nailer could be used for the finishing work.
<p>Flooring Stapler</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed for fastening wood flooring. • Flooring power tools drive staples (for standard hardwood flooring), nails (for extremely hard wood such as bamboo, acacia, walnut), or both using a 2-in-1 stapler/nailer. • Release mechanism: hitting the driver head with a hammer or mallet. • Side or rear load magazine. • Drives L-shape cleats or staples. • The base is made of a material that will not scratch the wood. • The air intake is inclined, making it easier to handle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifically made for precise staple placement. The stapler must be held solidly against the boards. • The fasteners are driven diagonally into the flooring, always at the same angle and depth, to provide straight, well-secured tongue and groove boards.
<p>Palm Nailer</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lightweight • Fits in the palm of your hand. • Works solely with an air compressor. • No magazine or trigger mechanism. • Powerful enough to repeatedly drive 1 ½" to 3 ½" nails. • Magnetic nose holds nails in place for accurate positioning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The palm nailer is made for hard-to-reach locations or cramped confined work, where using a larger nailer or hammer is impossible.

Refills

Nail and staple refills come in strips or coils. Here is an overview of the models available on the market in order to make an informed choice.

Strips

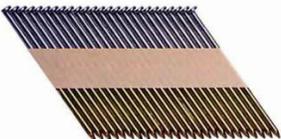
- Loading a nail strip is fast and easy. All you need to do it to slide the strip into the nail or staple gun's magazine.
- A strip can vary in quantity depending on the nail's type, e.g. 20 to 40 for framing nails and up to 120 for pin nails.
- The tool's housing is slimmer than a coil nail gun. A strip nailer works better in tight and confined areas.
- Some models take only one strip at a time and others can be loaded with two strips.
- The cost per nail is higher than for coil nails.

Coils

- The coil must be threaded, that takes a little bit more time and handling for refills.
- The coil canister holds between 120 to 300 fasteners. Coil nailers need to be reloaded less often than strip nailers.
- More nails, however, make the tool heavier, and by extension, somewhat more unwieldy.
- The cost per nail is lower than for strip nails.

Generally, the nails are covered with a dual-function coating, for lubricating and strengthening. When the nail is hammered in the surface or material, the intense friction heats the coating to melting point and lubricates the nail as it slides through. When the coating cools, it allows the nail to bond to the nailing surface, thus, increasing the holding strength. Roofing nails do not have this coating.

Nail and Coil Types

Nail types	Angle	Features	Models
Brad Nails 	90°	Headless/finish nails (or staples) glued together to make a strip.	Staplers, stapler/nailers Straight finish nailers
Framing Nails 	20° - 21°	Round-head nails held together by plastic. This type of strip holds fewer nails because they are widely spaced.	Framing nailers
Paper Collated Framing Nails 	28° - 34°	Clipped-head nails (provide more nails per strip) held together by paper tape. This type of nails are the most economical alternative.	Framing nailers (paper-collated framing nailers are the most popular)
Wire Collated Nails 	28°	Clipped-head nails held together by wire strips	Framing nailers
Coil Nails 	15° - 16°	Full round-head nails, held together by wire strips and rolled.	Roofing nailers, framing nailers, siding nailers

Staplers and Nailers' power sources

Nailers and staplers use different power sources for different projects and purposes. Look at the chart below to learn about the power sources used by each of them, with their different uses and features.

Power Source	Portability	How it works	Features
<p>Compressed Air (Pneumatic)</p> 	<p>Poor (The compressed air nailer and stapler must be connected to an air compressor, which requires an electrical supply)</p>	<p>The compressed air must drive the piston down to propel the nail out of the chamber.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High noise level • The compressor can be used with multiple tools • Cheaper to operate • For all types of nailers and staplers • Must be oiled prior to every use
<p>Gas powered</p> 	<p>Excellent (Gas cartridges or fuel cells are easy-to-carry)</p>	<p>With a gas-powered stapler or nailer, the gun's battery sends a charge to a spark plug. This ignites the gas, creating a small explosion. The resulting pressure propels the piston downward, so that the nail is shot from the gun.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoots 1,000 nails or more per cartridge and 4,000 nails per battery charge • Most expensive to operate • Gas cartridges cannot be refilled • For finish and framing nailers
<p>Electromagnetic (Battery powered)</p> 	<p>Good (no power cord necessary. However, it requires an electrical outlet nearby to recharge the battery)</p>	<p>The battery powers a mechanism (solenoid) to produce an electromagnetic force (electromagnet) that pushes the piston out, thus, driving the nail out.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somewhat noisy (upon firing, the electromagnetic mechanism produces a noise like that of a drill) • Shoots 400 nails per battery charge • Cheaper to operate than a combustion model • Requires a source of electricity to recharge the battery • Heavy • Takes only one gauge of nail
<p>Corded Nailer and Stapler</p> 	<p>Poor (The corded nailer must be connected to a constant power supply)</p>	<p>An electric motor compresses the spring, which drives the nail into the material</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very quiet • Perfect for small finishing, assembly and household tasks; uses up to 1 1/4" finish nails • Slower than all other types • Rarely jams or breaks

How to pick the right nailer and / or stapler for the job you need it for?

Applications	Stapler	Stapler/nailer	Finish nailer	Strip framing nailer	Coil framing nailer	Roofing nailer	Siding nailer
Craft work and small projects	Very good	Best	Good	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Attaching baseboards, mouldings, picture rails	N/A	Best	Very Good	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Building furniture	Very good (for hidden areas)	Very Good	Best	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Building house frames, decks, etc.	N/A	N/A	N/A	Best	Very good	N/A	N/A
Building pallets, fences and other sturdy installations	N/A	N/A	N/A	Very good	Best	N/A	N/A
Installing siding	N/A	Best (for finishing)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Best (for installation)
Laying asphalt shingles	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Best	N/A

Questions?

If you have questions about nailers and staples and their components, or if you can't find the information that you have been looking for, you can [contact us](#) by phone or email, or come visit us to our hardware and tool shop at the address below. You can also buy you tools online and get fast shipping everywhere in Canada or free in-store pickup at our store location.

Federated Tool – Retail Store

1581 Oxford St. East
London, Ontario, N5V 2Z4
 (click on the address for directions)

Toll Free: 1-800-387-0608

Phone: (519) 451-0100

Fax: (519) 451-9376

Email: sales@federatedtool.com

Shop online at federatedtool.com !