

## Masonry Tools

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**Abstract:** Masonry is all about building. The term can describe taking individual units (bricks, blocks, stones, etc.) and building structures with those units and mortar, or it can be used to describe the actual units themselves. Masons are the people who use the units to put everything together, and there are different types of masons, as well. These include brickmasons, stonemasons, and blockmasons. They all make buildings and other structures, but they do so in different ways and with different materials. Masons make all kinds of things. From small stone paths to huge, industrial-sized buildings, there is always a need for something to be created or built. That's not the only thing that masons do, though. They can also handle brick repair, tuckpointing, wall panels, decorative accent pieces, stone or marble cutting, and the installation of refractory tile or firebrick in locations like furnaces, boilers, and other environments that are designed for high temperatures.

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Masonry is all about building. The term can describe taking individual units (bricks, blocks, stones, etc.) and building structures with those units and mortar, or it can be used to describe the actual units themselves. Masons are the people who use the units to put everything together, and there are different types of masons, as well. These include brickmasons, stonemasons, and blockmasons. They all make buildings and other structures, but they do so in different ways and with different materials.

Masons make all kinds of things. From small stone paths to huge, industrial-sized buildings, there is always a need for something to be created or built. That's not the only thing that masons do, though. They can also handle brick repair, tuckpointing, wall panels, decorative accent pieces, stone or marble cutting, and the installation of refractory tile or firebrick in locations like furnaces, boilers, and other environments that are designed for high temperatures. There is no college degree needed to be a mason. Some people get into the job through trade schools or other types of learning environments, but many get involved because they begin interning with someone who is already in the business. For people who want to work in the trade, finding construction companies or self-employed individuals who are already working as masons and learning from them can be an excellent way to get all the knowledge, skill, and experience required to do a good job and begin work as either a blockmason, brickmason, or stonemason.

To work as a mason, the right tools are necessary. Here are the most commonly used tools a mason will need:

### Trowel

#### *Tool Description*

A trowel is a small tool, used by hand, with a flat blade that comes to a point at the end. It typically has a metal blade and a wooden handle, although some models can have plastic handles.

#### *Tool Usage*

Masons use trowels to scoop mortar from one location and put it in another. The mortar is removed from the bucket or other container in which it was mixed, and placed onto the brick or other unit where it will be used. Then the trowel is used to spread out the mortar and shape that mortar once another unit is seated. For example, a brickmason would put mortar on one brick with a trowel, place another brick on top, seat that brick properly, and then use the point or edge of the trowel to remove excess mortar and make the mortared area even.

#### *Masonry Level*

To use this tool correctly and consistently, a mason should have an intermediate or advanced level of skill, but new masons can also use it as they practice their skills.

#### *Best Brand*

There is no specific brand of trowel that is best, because so many companies make these items. A quality trowel from a name brand is often a better choice, but even inexpensive trowels can be acceptable, depending on the exact type of work they are being used for.

#### *Where to Buy*

Trowels can be purchased online through Amazon and other retailers. They can also be bought at Home Depot, Lowe's, and other home improvement and hardware stores, as well as through retail superstores like Walmart.

#### *How It Got Its Name*

The trowel has word origins in Latin and Old French, where it derived from the terms used for a scoop or a

skimmer.

**Mason's Hammer**



### *Tool Description*

The mason's hammer (which can also be called a brick hammer), has a flat face on one side, like a standard hammer, and a chisel shaped point on the other end.

### *Tool Usage*

A mason's hammer is used to gently tap bricks and other units into place, to tap the edges of a unit when it needs to be broken to fit into a particular space, and to chisel pieces of a unit of masonry off without the need to locate a separate chisel. The multi-tasking nature of this tool makes it very popular with masons.

### *Masonry Level*

A new mason can use this tool, and will need to do so in order to learn to work with it efficiently. Advanced masons generally use the tool, because they have become comfortable with it and they know that they can use it to shape the brick, stone, or other units to ensure that the finished product is produced in the desired way.

### *Best Brand*

The brand recommended most often by masons is Estwing. This brand is chosen for its durability, as it can last many years when a less expensive, lower quality hammer would have failed. There are other mason's hammer brands, but they don't have the reputation the Estwing offers.

### *Where to Buy*

Retailers such as Amazon and Home Depot carry the Estwing brand, as do many tool companies and hardware stores. Estwing also has a website where its hammers and other tools can be purchased.

### *How It Got Its Name*

The use of a word for mason's hammer has Germanic origins, and the original *hamer* or *hamor* likely meant "stone tool."

## **Mashing Hammer**

### *Tool Description*

The mashing hammer is generally a two to four-pound hammer with a striking surface on both ends. It looks very much like a sledgehammer with a shorter handle.

### *Tool Usage*

A mason uses a mashing hammer to strike the chisel when chiseling off a piece of block or brick. It is not recommended that a mason's hammer is used to strike the chisel, as that can cause damage or injury. The mashing hammer has a larger striking surface, which can guide the hammer to strike the chisel more solidly and provide a better end result.

### *Masonry Level*

New masons all the way up through those who are quite advanced in their craft can use a mashing hammer. The more skill a mason develops, the more easily they will be able to use the hammer to strike the chisel effectively and shape the mortar units the way they need to provide the proper end result.

### *Best Brand*

Estwing is the best brand of mashing hammer. They are durable and last a very long time. While other brands are available, they may not hold up to the tough working environment that most masons have.

### *Where to Buy*

Stores like Home Depot and Lowes carry Estwing, as does Amazon. There are other tool companies, both online and offline, that also carry the brand, as it's very popular with masons.

### *How It Got Its Name*

The tool got its name from the Germanic word *hamor* (also spelled *hamer*) which meant a stone tool.

## **Blocking Chisel**



#### *Tool Description*

This type of chisel is heavy and wide, and comes in several shapes and sizes. It is made from steel, and can either be solid steel or have a wooden handle. With a sharp edge on one end and a flatter end on the other side, the tool is a good addition to any mason's tool bag.

#### *Tool Usage*

A blocking chisel is used by placing the sharp edge against the masonry unit (such as a brick) where the cut needs to be made. The chisel is then struck on the flat end by a mashing hammer. That allows the sharp edge of the chisel to cut through the block, brick, or stone to provide a proper edge and a smaller piece of masonry that will fit into the space where it is needed.

#### *Masonry Level*

While every mason must learn to use this technique at some point, it is a more advanced skill. Positioning the blocking chisel the right way, hitting it with the proper force, and getting a clean cut on the first strike all take time and effort.

#### *Best Brand*

Stanley, Irwin, and Husky are all recommended brands of chisels, but there are other companies that also make them. The key is to get a blocking chisel that's affordable, but also that will last for a long period of time and that will keep a relatively sharp edge. Having to hone or re-edge a chisel all the time can get frustrating and slow down a mason's work.

#### *Where to Buy*

Chisels are popular items for many contractors and workers, so they can be purchased almost anywhere. Amazon offers them, as do Home Depot and Lowes. Many other retailers provide blocking chisels for sale, as well, so a mason in need of a chisel can get one quickly.

#### *How It Got Its Name*

Chisel came from a Latin word meaning "to cut," and a blocking chisel was called such because it was used for the cutting and shaping of blocks and related types of masonry.

### **Masonry Power Saw**



#### *Tool Description*

The masonry power saw requires electricity to operate, and has a blade that is specifically designed for cutting stone, block, and brick. It comes in different sizes and power levels, in order to handle a variety of jobs.

#### *Tool Usage*

The tool is used to cut bricks, blocks, and stone for larger jobs, as it's much faster and more durable than using a chisel, especially when cutting large units of masonry.

#### *Masonry Level*

Using a power masonry saw is better left to intermediate and advanced masons, along with newer masons who are more comfortable with the saw due to past use of power tools.

#### *Best Brand*

Arbortech is a commonly purchased brand of masonry power saw, but there are others, as well. Tool brands that belong to large retailers are generally also among the best choices for a masonry power saw.

#### *Where to Buy*

These types of saws can be purchased at major chain home improvement retailers such as Home Depot and Lowes. They are also available at smaller tool and hardware stores.

#### *How It Got Its Name*

Saw comes from the Germanic, meaning to cut, and masonry has word origins that are focused on bricks and blocks. So the masonry saw was named specifically for what it does.

## **Level**



#### *Tool Description*

Levels can be made from wood, plastic, or metal. They are long and slim, and they contain small plastic "bubbles" filled with fluid and marked with lines. They can be placed on a flat surface or up against a vertical post or other type of support, including a wall.

#### *Tool Usage*

The level is used to determine whether a surface is flat and even, or whether a vertical surface is truly upright or not. Ensuring that a surface is level is very important when building a home or commercial location.

#### *Masonry Level*

Anyone can use a level, and it doesn't require a high level of skill or knowledge to do so.

#### *Best Brand*

There are no specific brands of levels that are required, as all levels are calibrated to perform the same duty. A more durable level can be a good choice for a mason, though, due to the nature of the work.

#### *Where to Buy*

Levels can be bought just about anywhere, including Home Depot, Lowes, small hardware stores, and chain retailers such as Walmart.

*How It Got Its Name*

Level comes from the word *Libra*, which is Latin for balance.

**Mason's Line***Tool Description*

Mason's line is a type of heavy string or twine, which can be found in several different thicknesses and a variety of colors.

*Tool Usage*

The twine or other type of cord that is used for a mason's line is designed to be stretched between two fixed points. It can help a mason determine where a line of brick or block needs to be, or how high it should be raised as it is constructed.

*Masonry Level*

Any mason, from new to advanced, can use a mason's line properly.

*Best Brand*

Any brand of mason's line will work, and the color of the line is often more important than the brand. Brightly colored line shows up better, and can be easier to work with.

*Where to Buy*

Mason's line can be purchased at nearly any retailer, but hardware stores or big chain home improvement stores will have more options.

*How It Got Its Name*

This tool got its name because masons used it in large numbers to make sure their bricks or blocks were straight and even. It can also be used by many other construction workers, as well.

## Steel Square



### *Tool Description*

A steel square is not actually shaped like a square. It has two sides and a right angle, comprising 1/2 of a square or rectangle.

### *Tool Usage*

This tool is used for measuring, and also for ensuring that there is a straight edge or corner where the bricks or blocks meet.

### *Masonry Level*

A mason of any level, from new to advanced, can use a steel square.

### *Best Brand*

Brand is not particularly important with a tool like this, as any of the more commonly offered tool brand will be good choices. As long as the steel square is solid and durable, it will work well for a mason's needs.

### *Where to Buy*

A steel square can be purchased at a home improvement store, a chain retailer, or at a smaller tool or hardware store.

### *How It Got Its Name*

The square got its name from Germanic origins, because of the right angle shape it created at the corner.

## Jointers



#### *Tool Description*

Jointers are small tools that are relatively flat and narrow. They can sometimes be shaped a little like an S with less of a curve on the end.

#### *Tool Usage*

These tools are used to make the masonry joints look good, and to ensure that the mortar between the bricks or blocks looks good and is solid and even.

#### *Masonry Level*

Any level of mason can learn to use a jointer, but it's a better choice for an advanced mason than for one who is newer to the profession.

#### *Best Brand*

Kraft and Marshalltown are common jointer brands, but there are others, as well.

#### *Where to Buy*

Jointers can be purchased online from tool companies, and can also be found at hardware stores and home improvement retailers.

#### *How It Got Its Name*

The jointer got its name because of the way it is used to ensure that the joints between the masonry units work and look the way they should.

## Chalk Line



### *Tool Description*

A chalk line is a small container that holds loose chalk powder and a type of string, which can be extended for a specific distance and then rewound into the container when not in use.

### *Tool Usage*

The chalk line is used to make an even, straight line on a surface, and the chalk washes or wipes away later, leaving no permanent mark. It is an excellent way to mark something that needs to be cut, or to show the location where two objects should meet.

### *Masonry Level*

A new mason can use a chalk line, as this is not a complicated tool. However, it must be done right in order to get a clean, straight line.

### *Best Brand*

There are many brands of chalk line, and they all work in a similar manner. A metal chalk line container may be a better, more durable choice than a plastic casing.

### *Where to Buy*

Chalk lines are found just about anywhere, and can be purchased in nearly any retail store or home improvement center, along with hardware stores.

### *How It Got Its Name*

Chalk comes from Old English origins, and was used to designate a type of soft limestone.

## Brushes



### *Tool Description*

There are a number of brushes that are used for masonry, and most of them are soft bristled so as to avoid damaging the mortar placed between the masonry units.

### *Tool Usage*

Brushes are used to make the mortar joints look good, and to ensure that the masonry units are cleaned up so they can fit together properly.

### *Masonry Level*

Any mason can use brushes, although it can take some time to get the hang of making the mortar look just right.

### *Best Brand*

Any brand of brush will work, as long as the bristles have the softness the mason is looking for.

### *Where to Buy*

When buying brushes, masons can choose from options at home improvement stores and big chain retailers, along with smaller hardware stores.

### *How It Got Its Name*

The word brush comes from Old French, meaning "to sweep."

Mixing tools like shovels, buckets, hoes, wheelbarrows, and other common tools are also used by masons at various stages of their work, to ensure that they are able to make the finished product as beautiful and high-quality as possible. That's much easier with the right tools and plenty of practice, making masonry a good career for people who like to work with their hands.

**Source**

<http://www.careeroverview.com/brick-mason-careers.html>

<http://www.masonryforlife.com/HowToBasics.htm>.



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