

**F**or nearly two decades, Fein had the market for oscillating-multitool blades pretty well cornered. Knockoffs were sold by a few companies, and tipsters offered ways to fabricate homemade blades. For the most part, though, Fein was the only game in town.

To make matters worse, Fein knew that we needed them—that if we were plugging in that MultiMaster, whether for an accurate

plunge cut or a delicate flush cut, it was because no other tool could get the job done. So, often grumbling about blown profit margins, we ponied up the \$50 or so for a three-pack of blades that, adding insult to injury, often wore out at a disappointing pace.

### The blade game has changed

Since Fein's patent on the MultiMaster expired, the oscillating-multitool market

has expanded to include more than a dozen different brands. The number of companies making multitool blades also has grown, in many cases beyond the brands of tools themselves. We're not just choosing among the familiar brands like Fein, Bosch, and Dremel, but independent, sometimes small, sometimes online-only blade retailers. In short, the power of choice is back in the hands of the buyer. But with that choice



# Multitool Blades

**Torture  
Test**

Clean, fast cuts  
shouldn't cost a fortune

BY JUSTIN FINK

come more questions: Who makes the best blades? Is this low-cost blade from an online retailer really a bargain once you factor in the shipping cost?

Multitool blades come in lots of flavors, from coarse- to fine-tooth, plunge-cut to segmented (half-round shape), and even carbide- and diamond-tipped. For this review, we focused on bimetal blades, which are offered by all 12 brands and are intended for cuts in wood and

metal. Each of the blades is between 1½ in. and 1¾ in. wide, with a depth of cut between 1⅝ in. and 1¾ in. Although we didn't test other types of blades, we hope that the results of the bimetal-blade evaluation will serve as an indicator of the overall quality and performance of each brand.

Justin Fink is a senior editor. Photos by Rodney Diaz.

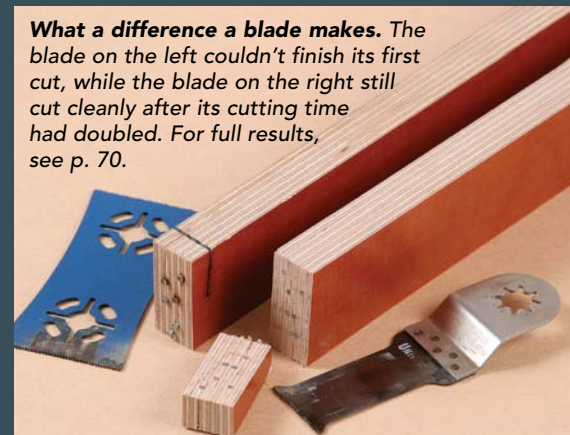
## HOW WE TESTED

### Let the blade do the work

To eliminate the possibility of the results being skewed from our bearing down on the tool during a cut, we built a counter-weighted armature that was balanced so that only the weight of the oscillating multitool—about 4 lb.—and a very minor downward pressure were driving the blade through the wood.

The mounting design of each blade is a bit different, and though there is some cross compatibility among brands, no multitool accepts every brand of blades. We thought it was more important to keep the tool constant, so we used the corded Bosch Multi-X tool because its wide, flat mounting surface made it easy to cinch down blades securely, even those that didn't fit perfectly. It wasn't a setup that toolmakers are likely to endorse, but it's probably done on a daily basis on job sites.

**What a difference a blade makes.** The blade on the left couldn't finish its first cut, while the blade on the right still cut cleanly after its cutting time had doubled. For full results, see p. 70.



### A formidable foe

We wanted a combination of cutting materials that would push the limits of these blades. We tried MDF, thick copper sheet metal, prefinished red-oak flooring, drywall screws, full racks of pneumatic finish nails, and 20-ga. steel strapping. Some combinations were too easy; others stopped the blades on the first pass. In the end, we settled on a length of dense ¾-in. phenolic plywood spiked with six 16-ga. finish nails.

### Failure is based on time

For each blade, we timed the first cut as the benchmark and then made repetitive cuts until it took the blade about twice the benchmark time to finish a cut. Once the cutting time was doubled, we made one additional cut to rule out a random fluke, and if the results were consistent, we declared the blade to be spent.

# A pile of smoking blades and a notepad full of data

After many long, not to mention loud, hours of repetitive endurance testing, we were left with the kind of wreckage and consistent results that only tool fanatics and scientists can appreciate. Some blades failed miserably (any cuts over four minutes were declared automatic failures); others cut for so long that we wondered

when they would finally quit. The three blades shown below were the standout performers, some still making clean cuts even after doubling their cutting time.

But there's more to a good blade than its cutting prowess; don't overlook the pricing. I've been told by some tool retailers that the typical profit

margin on an oscillating multi-tool is slim, and the blades and other accessories are where retailers and distributors make up the difference.

Many multitool blades can be bought locally at a home center or lumberyard. For those who are ordering blades online—which for some of these brands is the only

option—shipping cost also becomes a big factor. Shipping costs listed below are for delivery to our offices here in Connecticut.

Where possible, we listed the price for individual blades, but in some cases, the per-blade price is based on the purchase of a larger pack. Also, prices may fluctuate.

## Bosch

These blades cut the quickest, lasted the longest, and were still leaving clean, burn-free cuts well after their declared point of failure. Factor in the savings in shipping when bought locally, and this blade is a no-brainer.



## Fein

The original benchmark, these blades lived up to their name, performing quite well. Our



test blade made 11 cuts, with only 16 seconds separating the first cut from the final cut. At about 2 1/8 in., the depth of plunge is the best of the bunch. These blades are widely available, so shop for the lowest price.

## Versa-Tool

Sold by a company that offers specialized concrete- and granite-fabrication tools, these blades were the surprise of the review. Although the price with shipping was about average, the number of cuts was well above most of the competitors, second only to Bosch.



Product and source	Size	Price per blade	Shipping cost	First cut	Final cut	Number of cuts
<b>Bite Tools</b> www.bitertools.com	1 3/8 in.	\$10	\$15	3:39	N/A	1
<b>Bite Tools</b> www.bitertools.com	1 3/4 in.	\$10	\$15	4:00	N/A	1
<b>Bosch OSC118F</b> www.boschtools.com	1 1/8 in.	\$12.10	\$5	0:08	0:20	25
<b>CEL MT1-AC12</b> www.cel-us.com	1 3/8 in.	\$9.90	\$8.16	0:51	2:57	4
<b>Dremel MM462</b> www.dremel.com	1 1/8 in.	\$13.62	\$5	1:21	4:08	2
<b>Exchange-A-Blade 1070042</b> www.exchangeablade.com	1 1/4 in.	\$11.69	Local only	1:27	3:19	2
<b>Fein Universal E-Cut</b> www.amazon.com	1 1/8 in.	\$12.83*	\$5	0:15	0:36	11
<b>Fitzall Blades</b> www.fitzallblades.com	1 3/8 in.	\$4	\$1.75 to \$4.95	4:55	N/A	1
<b>Genesis GAMT306</b> www.amazon.com	1 3/8 in.	\$6.97	\$5	0:57	2:15	2
<b>Imperial MM300</b> www.multitoolblade.com	1 1/4 in.	\$14.95	\$6.50	1:35	3:59	5
<b>Imperial MMT340</b> www.multitoolblade.com	1 3/4 in.	\$17.95	\$6.50	0:37	1:43	6
<b>Kent STR-9</b> www.kentsupplies.com	1 3/8 in.	\$9	\$3.99 to \$7.99	2:33	7:16	2
<b>Oshlun MMA-0103</b> www.oshlun.com	1 1/3 in.	\$5.13*	\$5	4:09	N/A	1
<b>Rockwell RW9122</b> www.rockwelltoolsdirect.com	1 3/8 in.	\$21.99*	Free	0:47	2:03	4
<b>Versa-Tool MB1B</b> www.specialtydiamond.com	1 1/8 in.	\$16.90*	\$4	0:33	1:09	23

\*Price based on 3-pack



### Bite Tools

I had high hopes for these blades, especially the double-sided version. Unfortunately, both blades were barely able to finish a cut, and the nails badly damaged the teeth. The tool must be run at a slower speed, or the blades shatter. Since our testing, both blades were discontinued and replaced with new models.



### CEL

This U.K.-based company, which also sells in North America, has a full line of blades and accessories to go with its multitool. The blade tested here was priced about average, with performance to match.



### Dremel

The Dremel oscillating multitool is a great value at about \$100, but the blades are far less of a bargain, especially for their performance. The cut time for this blade nearly quadrupled between the first cut and the second.



### Exchange-A-Blade

This company is unique because you buy a blade, use it, and then bring it back to get a replacement blade for a lower price. This savings may make sense if the program is available locally, but these blades are not sold online and weren't standouts.



### Fitzall Blades

With a great price point and shipping cost, we were hoping for a Cinderella story with the performance of this blade. Sadly, the first cut took nearly five minutes, so we didn't bother with any additional testing.



### Imperial

We tested two Imperial blades, one standard bimetel (the MM300, above left) and one with titanium teeth (above right). A promotional video shows the MM300 cutting through 97 framing nails. It slowed down much more quickly in our testing. Still, the blade, competitively priced for its performance, is a good value.

The titanium-edged blade was a late addition to the test; it has just come to market. Advertised to last up to five times longer than the competition, we saw only a marginal improvement over the MM300. It did, however, cut more quickly.



### Genesis

These blades are comparable in construction to the others in the test, and cutting was similar to many of the lower-tier brands. However, the price for a blade and shipping are about the same as most other blades alone.



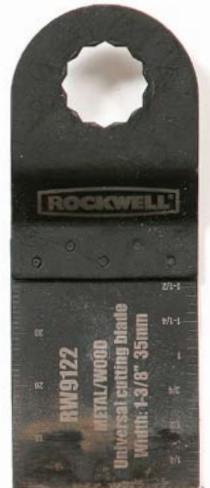
### Kent

Kent offers blades with several different hole patterns to fit a variety of multitools. The 1½-in. plunge capacity was average, and performance was subpar, showing a significant drop-off between the first and second cuts.



### Oshlun

All sizzle and no steak, these blades smoked heavily but cut poorly, slowing to a crawl halfway through the first cut. We tested two separate blades—each taking more than four minutes on its first pass—before moving on.



### Rockwell

Rockwell has the most expensive blades in this group, but it is also the only company to offer free shipping. The cut speed, quality, and performance before failure were all about average.