RATCHET SCREWDRIVERS

One type of rapid-action screwdriver is the spiral ratchet screwdriver. This screwdriver has a spring-loaded mechanism in the handle. Pushing down on the handle causes the bit of the screwdriver to turn rapidly, thus driving the screw in a shorter time than could be accomplished with the use of a conventional screwdriver. Letting up on the handle allows the operator to continue the action. These screwdrivers come in several styles. Some have the mechanism as part of the handle; others have it as part of the shank. In either case a small lever is set so that even though the operator moves the handle back and forth — or up and down — the bit of the screwdriver moves in only one direction, to drive the screw. The lever can also be set so that the ratchet action removes the screw. And it also can be set so that the screwdriver can be used as a conventional screwdriver, with no ratchet action.

FIG. 11. Two types of ratchet screwdrivers. The one at the top has the ratchet mechanism in the handle. The lower screwdriver has the ratchet in the handle and operates with a spiral action.

When using any spiral ratchet screwdriver, it is best to push down firmly and slowly — until the screw is properly started — otherwise you may find that the bit has slipped out of the slot. These screwdrivers should be stored only in the extended position to prevent the possibility of a sudden, unexpected release by someone unfamiliar with the tool.

Large screws in tough wood can be easily driven by using special bits that fit into a carpenter’s brace. Because tremendous turning power is generated by the brace, make sure you have a proper pilot hole, as it is quite easy to shear off the head or even twist the screw in half if too much pressure is applied to a balky screw. Needless to say, it is always best to drill a pilot hole when driving large screws with a carpenter’s brace.

FIG. 12. Special screwdriver bit that can be chucked into carpenter’s brace.

FIG. 13. Hazardous Harry strikes out again. Please, Harry, don’t use pliers on the shank of a screwdriver in order to remove a stubborn screw.

WRONG
FIG. 14. Never, never use a screwdriver as a cold chisel. Just look what Hazardous Harry has done to the tip of a perfectly good screwdriver. In addition, our hero is not even wearing safety goggles.