BASIC SAFETY RULES THAT APPLY TO THE USE OF A SCREWDRIVER

- Make sure that the tip fits the slot of the screw; not too loose and not too tight.
- Do not use a screwdriver as a cold chisel or punch.
- Do not use a screwdriver near live wires (or any other tool, for that matter).
- Do not expose a screwdriver to excessive heat.
- Redress a worn tip with a file in order to regain a good straight edge.
- Discard a screwdriver that has a worn or broken handle.
- A screwdriver should never be used as a pry bar. If it is over-stressed in this manner, the blade might break and send a particle of steel into the operator’s arm or perhaps even into his eye.

FIG.2

- This tip is too narrow for the screw slot; it will bend or break under pressure.
- A rounded or worn tip. Such a tip will ride out of the slot as pressure is applied.
- This tip is too thick. It will only serve to chew up the slot of the screw.
- A chisel ground tip will also ride out of the screw slot. Best to discard it.
- This tip fits, but it is too wide and will tear the wood as the screw is driven home.
- The right tip. This tip is a snug fit in the slot and does not project beyond the screw head.

COMMON SLOTTED HEAD SCREWS

DRIVING THE SCREW

Always make a pilot hole before driving a screw. This is especially important when driving a screw into hardwood or when the screw is near the edge of a board. Pilot holes can be made in softwood, and in some hardwoods, with an awl – if the screws to be used are small. However, if you are driving No. 6 and larger screws it is best to drill a pilot hole or use a threaded screw hole starter. Pilot holes should always be made if the screws are to be driven into dense hardwoods.

If the screw is a flathead, the pilot hole should also be countersunk so the head of the screw will be flush with the work when it is driven home.
FIG. 4 THE RIGHT WAY TO DRIVE A SCREW

- Insert the tip of the screw in the pilot hole. Insert the screwdriver tip in the slot of the screw. Hold the tip steady with one hand and make sure the shank of the screwdriver is perpendicular to the head of the screw and in line with the shank of the screw.

- Use the left hand (if you are right-handed) to keep the blade steady as you turn the handle of the screwdriver.

- After the screw is almost in, it is safe to use both hands as shown for extra turning power to seat the screw. Note the position of the left hand (if you are right-handed). This will allow additional downward pressure to be applied, thus making certain that the driver tip is firmly seated in the screw slot. If the screw is a flathead, make sure that the pilot hole has a countersunk recess at top and screwdriver tip is narrow enough to avoid touching wood.

The job of driving the screw can be eased considerably if the threads are given an application of wax – this is preferable to soap, as soap has a tendency to rust the screw threads making possible future withdrawal difficult.

Unless you have drilled or made some sort of a pilot hole, a screw will tend to follow the grain of the wood. So, having drilled or made a pilot hole, hold the screw as indicated in Fig. 4 with the screwdriver tip firmly engaged in the slot. Turn the screwdriver gently to engage the first one or two threads of the screw and make sure that the screw is being driven straight. After the screw has been started, and you know it will be driven straight, remove your fingers from the screw and apply your talents and attention to the screwdriver. The screw should now be absolutely perpendicular to the surface of the work (unless the screw is to be driven at an angle) with the screwdriver held in line with the screw.

It is much easier to drive a screw straight if the handle of the screwdriver is large enough to maintain the necessary torque for the size of the screw to be used.

A good quality blade, properly hardened, is a must especially when driving large diameter screws into tough woods.