



## Building Basics

By Roy Harrington

Over time and after building many ramps, each team leader will figure out what tools they need to have when heading off to a client's home. If you are new to building, you either have to figure it out for yourself—over time and after building many ramps—or you learn from others. This month's article is a chance to learn from others with some suggestions for what to include in your toolbox when getting ready for a build.

### Worksite Tools

There is a minimum set of tools needed to build a ramp, but there is also the "might-need-it" list of tools and other supplies and the "nice-if-funds-and-space-allow" list, which we generally have to figure out on our own after building many ramps.

The minimum set:

- Miter saw (technically not absolutely necessary but so much better, faster and safer than a circular or reciprocating saw for cutting to lumber length)
- Extension cord with built-in 15-amp electrical breaker (better to trip the breaker on the cord than to deal with the client's breaker box)
- Battery-powered drill/drivers (with appropriate bits for your box of screws)
- Measuring tape
- Pencil
- Level
- Speed square
- Hammer
- Circular saw (battery, plug-in or both)
- Wrenches and/or sockets for lags and/or carriage bolts
- Camera or phone (yes, it's not absolutely necessary for building the ramp, but pictures are very important for reporting, recruiting and fundraising)

The might-need-it list (if you haven't needed any of these, you have been very lucky or haven't built enough ramps yet):

- Chisel
- Shims (found in the door department of your local big box or home improvement store)
- Phillips, slotted, square and T-25 bits for disassembly of existing structures
- Extra extension cord(s)
- Reciprocating saw with metal and wood cutting blades of various lengths
- Belt sander and extra belts

- Coarse file or rasp
- Clamps
- Big Sharpie for marking treated lumber to be easily seen
- Pliers
- Adjustable wrench
- Phillips and slotted screwdrivers
- Pry bar
- Chalk line
- Hammer drill with masonry bits appropriate for the screws or anchors you will be using
- Various drill bits, but at least ¼- and 3/8-inch

The nice-to-have-available list if space and funds allow:

- Battery-powered planer (it's surprising how valuable this tool can be on a ramp build)
- Light socket to outlet adapter
- Generator (in some specific cases this may be a necessity, which was hopefully identified in advance by the surveyor)
- Metal plates and/or beveled lumber and/or rubber transition ramps in a couple thicknesses and at least 36 inches long to deal with threshold issues not identified by the surveyor
- Angle grinder with cutoff and grinding wheel
- Jig saw

One option for the “sometimes or rarely needed” type tools is to know which ones can be borrowed from your team members based on survey information, such as the need for a generator or the need to drill into concrete.

The list(s) above still may not cover every situation, and some builders will consider most or all of the listed items to be necessary. Please email [texasramps.roy@gmail.com](mailto:texasramps.roy@gmail.com) with any suggested additions that may help a fellow ramp builder show up fully prepared every time.

### **Please send pictures of module and or cutting jigs**

If you have a jig for building the modules (or frames) that make up our ramps and/or a jig for repeatedly cutting the pieces of lumber to length, please send pictures and a description of what you like (or don't like) and anything else that might be helpful to others when building their own jig. Depending on number of pictures and descriptions received, some or all will be used in a future newsletter.

### **Do you have other tips or suggestions to share?**

There are a lot of very good ideas developed by ramp builders across the state. Please send any questions, comments or potential ramp construction topics to [texasramps.roy@gmail.com](mailto:texasramps.roy@gmail.com) to help others build ramps better, stronger and faster.