

PLIER SETS

A set of pliers will help you get to grips with fiddly jobs on your car – we pick the best

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AE Dave Pollard
 WITH a set of pliers you'll be able to cut, turn and hold most things while working on your car. The best way to get started with these tools is to buy a set that comprises hefty combination pliers, a long-nose version for delicate work, and side cutters for snipping through wires, hoses and cable ties.
 Adding adjustable water-pump (slip joint) pliers adds to a set's versatility, while handle covers are important for comfort and to provide grip when working around fluids. Pliers are a tool box essential, so which set can get to grips with your car maintenance?

How we tested them

WE marked the comfort and grip of handles, overall build quality of the tools, and looked for smooth opening and closing of the jaws. Grip was assessed by trying to turn nuts that were tightened to increasing torques. We tried the side cutters on a Bowden cable (a thin cable running through a hollow one) and thick 45-amp wire from a stereo installation. We also checked storage, and finally compared the best prices from online retailers.

Silverline VDE Expert Pliers Set 282501

Price: £23.85 Rating: ★★★★★
 Contact: 01935 382222, www.silverlinetools.com
 Pliers included: Cutters, combination, long nose

BEST BUY THIS conventionally sized set can handle most jobs, most of the time. At 180mm long, the combination was seriously strong, featuring useful semi-circular jaws, while the side cutters easily passed our tests.

We liked the corrosion-resistant satin finish, as well as the comfortable and grippy two-tone handles with large slip guards for safety. Each pair has been tested and approved to DIN standard/10,000V, so they would give peace of mind whether you're working on the car or in a domestic situation. All this with a lifetime warranty, a carry case and a great price.



Draper 33057 Carbon Steel Mini Plier Set

Price: £28.62 Rating: ★★★★★
 Contact: 023 8026 6355, www.drapertools.com
 Pliers included: Long nose, bent nose, flat nose, end cutters, cutters



RECOMMENDED A PREVIOUS test winner, this set still impressed, not least in terms of value for money. The five sprung pliers were much smaller than most here, the longest being the combination and long-nose pairs at 120mm, with the end cutters (pincers) being a mere 105mm.

They are clearly made for more delicate work where space is at a premium, especially the bent-nose pliers. The side cutters failed on the Bowden cable and made heavy weather of the electrical wire. We still think they're a great addition to a conventional, harder-working plier set, though.



Sealey High Leverage Pliers Set AK8376

Price: £26.40 Rating: ★★★★★
 Contact: 01284 757500, www.sealey.co.uk
 Pliers included: Cutters, long nose, combination

RECOMMENDED A SERIOUSLY macho-looking set from Sealey, sold under its Premier banner, with thick and comfortable dual-material handles and cool black and polished steel-effect jaws. There was a slight shoulder to prevent fingers slipping, but a larger shield would have been useful.

The needle-nose pliers were joint longest, at 200mm, while the combination pliers (175mm long) could handle most tasks. The side cutters were as good as the Ergos (P62), slicing easily through the two cables. Perhaps a little costly, but they do have a lifetime warranty.

Kamasa PL4041 3-Piece Plier Set

Price: £22.99 Rating: ★★★★★
 Contact: 01926 815000, www.kamasa.co.uk
 Pliers included: Cutters, long nose, combination

WE liked the sizing on this heavy-duty set, with hefty 175mm combinations and smaller, 150mm needle nose and side cutters. The handles on all were thick, very comfortable and grippy even with oily hands, and the slip guards at the top are particularly effective.

The semicircular sections in the combination pliers made gripping nuts and bolts easier, but while the side cutters did manage to snip the electrical wiring, they couldn't hack the Bowden cable. That's a shame, because this effective, attractive and technically adept set would have gained more points.



PRODUCTS Plier sets



Draper 81147 4-Piece Soft Grip Pliers Set

Price: £25.94 Rating: ★★★★★

Contact: 023 8026 6355, www.draper-tools.com

Pliers included: Combination, long nose, cutters, water pump

THIS IS one of two four-piece sets, and we thought the combination pliers could have been a bit longer, 160mm being not quite enough to cope with tougher tasks. The water-pump pliers, though, were usefully long, at 240mm. They offered five width settings, selected manually, although we thought they should have had at least partially semi-circular jaws, given they could be used for pipework.

The handles were very similar to the Kamasa set (P61) and easy on the hands. They worked well, although the side cutters struggled a lot with both cables.

Sealey Pliers Set AK8564

Price: £23.98 Rating: ★★★★★

Contact: 01284 757500, www.sealey.co.uk

Pliers included: Cutters, combination, long nose

ONLY the second set to come with storage, in this instance a tool roll with eyelets for wall hanging and Velcro tape for easy transport. The sizing was good, with long, strong combination pliers, backed by the lengthiest of long-nose pliers we tried.

The quality was evident and backed up by a lifetime warranty, but the vinyl-dipped handles didn't give much in the way of comfort, especially when applying a lot of pressure, and became rather slippery when used with greasy hands. Disappointingly, the side cutter couldn't defeat the cables.



Ergo All Round Pliers Tool Set BH9897

Price: £69 Rating: ★★★★★

Contact: 01709 731731, www.bahco.com

Pliers included: Combination, long nose, cutters, slip joint

ALTHOUGH languishing near the bottom of our test, this Ergo (Bahco) plier set was one of our favourites, especially for the superb build quality – the tools felt like they'd last forever. The grippy handles – a thermoplastic surface on polypropylene – were comfortable even when applying lots of pressure, and the side cutters were easily the sharpest here on our samples.

We liked the slip-joint pliers, which could be adjusted through 12 positions one-handed using the neat thumb button. The downside is the price, but they'd be a serious investment.



Stanley 3 Piece Plier Set 084 114

Price: £11 Rating: ★★★★★

Contact: www.amazon.co.uk

Pliers included: Cutters, long nose, water pump

EASILY the cheapest set on test, these are described as basic, which they feel. The handles were dipped, so there wasn't much hand protection. The set didn't include combination pliers, instead there's a small pair of 150mm water-pump pliers, which would do much of the same work.

They felt a bit sloppy when switching positions, while the side cutter couldn't make headway on the Bowden cable, and made heavy weather of the electrical one. Perhaps okay for emergencies, but there are better sets here for not much extra.



Auto Express Verdict

THE Silverline VDE set excelled in all areas, while the DIN electrical approval was a welcome bonus. For smaller, more fiddly tasks, the Draper 33057 set would be an excellent addition to any toolkit, while Sealey's AK8376 set was impressive, despite being a bit pricey.

1. Silverline VDE Expert Pliers Set 282501
2. Draper 33057 Carbon Steel Mini Plier Set
3. Sealey High Leverage Pliers Set AK8376