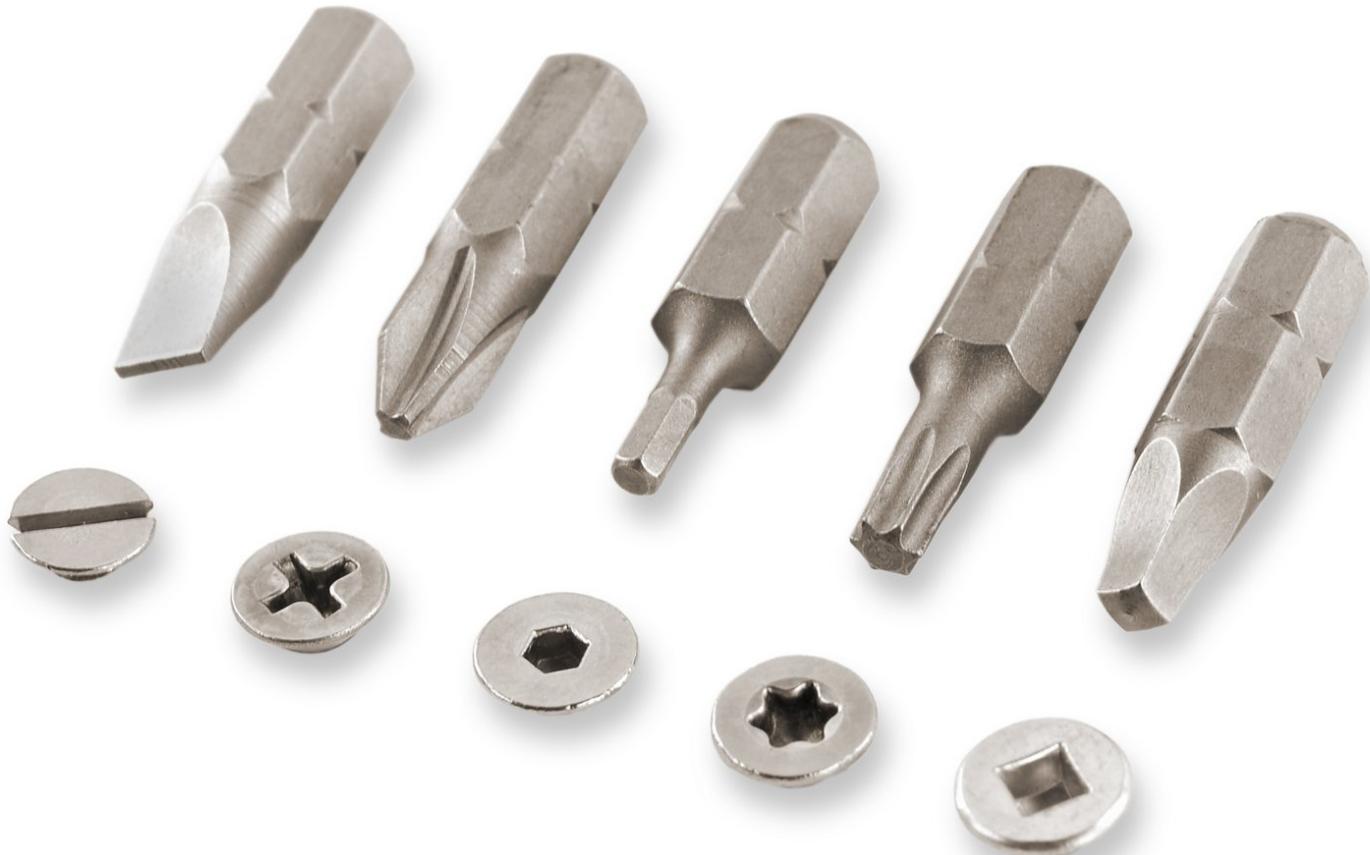




# Screwdriver Best Practices

Learn to use the correct screwdriver type, size, and technique to avoid stripping screws.

Written By: Jeff Suovanen



## INTRODUCTION

You probably know “righty-tighty, lefty-loosey,” but we’ve rounded up a few additional tips to help you perfect your screwdriver technique and avoid the wrath of the stripped screw.

If you found this page just a bit too late, twirl on over to our [stripped screw removal guide](#).

## Step 1 — Driver Selection



- Different screw heads call for different driver types. Whether it be Phillips, Japanese Industrial Standard (JIS), Pozidrive, Torx, Triwing, or plain old Flathead, use the correct driver for your application.
- Using a driver that's "close enough"—such as by turning a Phillips screw with a Flathead driver—can sometimes get you out of a bind, but mostly it's a recipe for trouble.
- What's that, you say? That sounds like a lot of drivers to keep track of? Try using a set of interchangeable bits, like the [64 Bit Kit](#) for electronics repair or the [Universal Bit Kit](#) for larger applications.

## Step 2 — Size Selection



ⓘ A correctly sized driver should “fill up” the screw head, utilizing both the full depth and width of the socket.

- Beginners commonly make the mistake of using a driver that’s too small. An undersized driver slips easily, damaging the screw head and making it difficult to turn afterward—even with a correctly-sized driver. This is known as a *stripped screw*.
- An oversized driver fits into the screw only shallowly, if at all.
- When you find a driver that fits about right, compare the next size up as well as the next size down before you proceed.
- In general, use the largest driver size that fits snugly into the screw.

## Step 3 — Proper Use



- Keep your drivers in good working condition by using them only as designed.

 Avoid using screwdrivers as improvised pry tools or chisels.

- Prying with a screwdriver can bend or break the tip, making it useless for turning screws.
- Chiseling with a driver can deform the tip. A damaged driver like this one no longer fits snugly in the screw head, resulting in slippage (and stripped screws).

- To avoid stripping screws, only use drivers that are in good condition.

## Step 4



- Use *continuous downward pressure* to keep the driver tip in contact with the screw.
- A limp grip or a lack of pressure will cause the driver to simply slip out of the screw head instead of turning the screw.

## Step 5

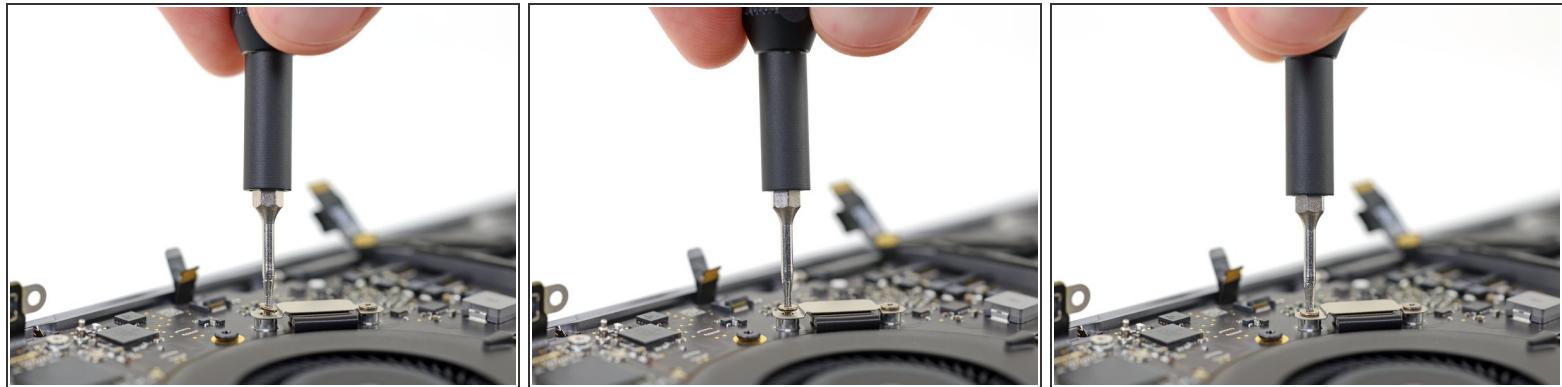


- Keep the driver directly in line with the screw, with the shaft directly over the screw head. The driver and screw should be “on-axis,” forming a straight line.

! Holding the driver at an angle creates a poor fit between the driver and the screw head. Result: slippage and probable damage to the screw.

i Sometimes the screw itself needs to go into the surface at an angle. Keep the driver positioned correctly relative to the screw, rather than the surface it's going into.

## Step 6



- Whenever you install a screw, first turn the screw counter-clockwise (in the “loosey” direction) to “seat” the screw.
  - Turn slowly until you feel the screw level off and sink slightly, then stop.
  - Now it's safe to tighten the screw.

**i** A properly installed screw will turn easily until it's fully tight.

**!** An improperly threaded screw gets increasingly difficult to tighten—because the misaligned threads are cutting across the threads in the screw hole, causing permanent damage. This is known as "cross-threading."

- If your screw doesn't tighten easily, back off and carefully re-seat it, and try again.

## Step 7



- Finally, use appropriate torque when tightening screws down. A properly fastened screw will be snug, but not so tight that your driver starts to slip.
- *i* This is largely a matter of feel, so your technique will improve with practice.
- ⚠ Smaller screws generally require less torque; over tightening them can damage their threads.
- Very small screws—such as those used in phones and tablets—require very little tightening force. As soon as you feel resistance, give it another quarter turn or less and then stop.