

Labeling My Wrenches, Version 1.1

By R. G. Sparber

Protected by Creative Commons.¹

In almost every situation, I just want to pick a wrench that fits. The size doesn't matter. When I guess wrong, I usually need the adjacent wrench. As I focus on the task at hand, it is a minor annoyance to look at a $\frac{3}{8}$ inch wrench and have to stop and think that I need a $\frac{7}{16}$ inch wrench. Why not just convert it all to 16^{ths}?



Is this a good idea? That is a “human factors” question. Only by living with this scheme for a while will I know. I can always pull off the painter’s tape and go back to those crazy fractions written underneath.

¹ This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

Dave Kellogg generously shared his insights and good work. He wrote –



As a pun, I call your system "HexTric" (hexadecimal to imply sixteenths, and metric to imply non-fractional). I decided to try it on one wrench set to see how it works. The only reservation I have is whether I confuse HexTric and Metric wrenches. I believe that this won't be a problem, since I've standardized on red labels for SAE and blue labels for metric.

I like labeling things with various colors of P-Touch labels to indicate organization. (Obviously, I'm not color blind.) Before applying the label to the tool, I paint the area with contact cement for better adhesion. If (or when) a label gets bugged up, I just make a new one. Occasionally I'll protect a label with a wrap of clear packing tape. (*Editor's note: Coating the labels with Go2 Glue might provide more protection.*)



For ratchet wrenches, I wanted a clearer indication of the direction for tighten vs loosen. Hence the green "On" and red "Off" labels on opposite sides of the wrench. (*Editor's note: I appreciate having the color and text because I will forget the meanings of the colors.*)



For the way I work, I like taking an entire set of a tool type to the work. I hang the socket board on the outside of my toolbox to increase direct access and to conserve space in the drawers. On the board, there are separate socket rows for 1/4", 3/8", and 1/2" drive. The large labels on each socket are MUCH easier to

use than peering for the embossed numbers. 6-point sockets (which I prefer) are labeled in white on blue (for SAE, black on red). 12-point sockets are the inverse with blue on white (red on white for SAE).

It takes several hours to apply all the labels with contact cement. However, for me, it is worth the investment. I have observed that when other people work with me, they much prefer my labeled tools over their own unlabeled tools.

I'd like to use the "highest common denominator" nomenclature for my fractional drill set indexes, using X 64's of an inch. I haven't done this yet, because I want to also indicate the conventional fractional sizes. Probably, I'll make up a laser printed tag that is sized for each tier in the drill index. BTW, I ground a slight taper on the butt end of each drill to make it slightly easier to reinsert the drill back into its place in the drill index -- another well-spent 10 minutes.

Dave can borrow my tools any day if they come back like this!

I welcome your comments and questions.

If you want me to contact you each time I publish an article, email me with “Subscribe” in the subject line. In the body of the email, please tell me if you are interested in metalworking, software plus electronics, or both so I can put you on the best distribution list.

If you are on a list and have had enough, email me “Unsubscribe” in the subject line.

Rick Sparber

Rgsparber.ha@gmail.com

Rick.Sparber.org