

YOUR THOUGHTS?

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# MULTITOOLS

*A multitool puts a number of your roadside and trailside essentials into one compact package. Editor **Dan Joyce** tests four*

**THE IDEAL** multitool is the one that has all the tools you need and none you don't. Our inner Boy Scout/Girl Guide might crave the one with a fistful of functions, but some are like the Swiss Army knife's hoof pick or fish scaler: dead weight. The main point of a multitool is convenience. You carry less weight and volume than you would with workshop separates.

What's essential in terms of function will depend on what bike you ride, where and how you ride it and, crucially, how well it's maintained. Prevention is better than cure. I've focused on four tools with spoke keys and chain splitters, since a buckled wheel or broken chain can end anyone's ride, irrespective of preparation. All come with one or more Allen keys and screwdrivers as well.

## EASE OF USE

Tools on a multitool are shorter and surrounded by other tools, which can limit access to harder-to-reach nuts and bolts. Check at home that the multitool will do all the jobs you expect of it. Leverage is an issue. Fully unfold the multitool to lengthen it, and put something between tool and palm (glove, spare buff, etc) when exerting force.

## PORTABILITY

Multitools with a chain tool weigh around 100-200g, while minimalist ones without can weigh less than 50g. All fit easily in the palm of your hand and can be carried in the smallest seatpack. Think twice about putting a multitool in a pocket. They can jump out of jersey pockets or dig into your body in a fall.

## FUNCTIONS

If you can remove the wheels and tyres, adjust the gears and brakes, tighten loose bolts, tension spokes, and fix the chain you've got most bases covered. The multitool doesn't have to do every job. Dedicated tyre levers (e.g. Pedro's) work better than those on multitools. Additional lightweight tools, such as a Spokey (10g) and a Topeak Super Chain Tool (42g stripped down), combine well with minimalist multitools.

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## DURABILITY

Plastic, carbon fibre, wood and aluminium are all okay for the side-plates of a multitool, but the tool parts themselves need to be hardened steel, e.g. chrome-vanadium. That way they won't round off and ruin bolt or screw heads. A multitool in a seatpack gets shaken around; folding ones may need occasional tightening at the pivots. Occasional light lubrication here is worthwhile too.

## CUSTOMISATION

As far as I know, no manufacturer offers a customisable multitool but it's an easy DIY job to create one. Buy two multitools of the same brand, one with your preferred size tool body, and a bigger one with the required tools. Disassemble. Rebuild. You can also simplify the fittings on your bike – for example, so that you need fewer sizes of Allen key.





1

**1 TOPEAK TOOL MONSTER**

£49.99 [extrauk.co.uk](http://extrauk.co.uk)

It looks like an evolution of Topeak's old The Power 21, one of which I used for years until the smaller Allen keys snapped off. Here they shouldn't, as they fold out. Apart from the Torx screwdrivers (folding), and the chain hook (held by a magnet), everything else is part of the two solid, stainless steel tool bodies. Durability should be good.

Access with the 8mm spanners can be awkward; otherwise, the Tool Monster is easy to use. The two parts slot together to improve leverage. The any-speed chain tool is excellent, better than many workshop models. The facility to reconnect chains with joining pins was no use to me; I use KMC MissingLinks. Tools: 1.5, 2, 2.5, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8mm Allen keys; T10, T25 Torx; 8, 9, 15mm spanners; #2 Phillips screwdriver; 3.2, 3.4mm spoke keys; two-position chain tool; chain hook; chain pin breaker. Size, weight: 110x48x15mm, 176g.

• **Odd looking but effective, with good leverage, a great chain tool, and a 15mm spanner**



2

**2 PEDRO'S SIX-PACK CHAIN TOOL**

£14.99 [2pure.co.uk](http://2pure.co.uk)

Pedro's compact chain tool doubles as a spoke key: three sizes are cut into the handle. The handle's length makes the chain tool more comfortable to use than the Lezyne's or Revolution's. Its rivet extractor is turned with a 5mm Allen key, which is held to the chain tool with a rubbery housing. There's a flat-blade screwdriver on the Allen key's other end, and this will fit derailleur H and L screws. I'd pack just the chain tool/spoke key part, however, and use a 5mm Allen key and Phillips head from a multitool like a Lezyne V5 or Topeak Mini 6. (Combined weight would be around 110g.) Tools: two-position chain tool; 3.2, 3.3, 3.5mm spoke keys; 5mm Allen key; flat-blade screwdriver. Size, weight: 75x43x15mm, 76g.

• **Works best as an adjunct to a minimalist multitool, so the Allen key isn't essential**



3

**3 LEZYNE STAINLESS 20**

£39.99 [upgradebikes.co.uk](http://upgradebikes.co.uk)

Like most multitools, the Lezyne Stainless 20 has a selection of tools that fold out from pivots at each end. The tools are stainless steel while the side-plates are aluminium. Build quality is good: the tools are well supported at the pivots, so don't twist in use nor rattle loose in your seatpack. The chain tool requires an uncomfortably firm thumb-and-forefinger grip but does work. The chain tool incorporates three sizes of spoke key, something I'd like to see on simpler Lezyne multitools like the V10. The serrated blade, bottle opener and 8 and 10mm spanners are useful additions for touring. I wouldn't use the metal tyre lever. Tools: 2, 2.5, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8mm Allen keys; T25, T30 Torx; Phillips and flat head screwdrivers; two-position chain tool; 3.22 and 3.45mm and Mavic Mtv spoke keys; 8 and 10mm spanners; tyre lever; disc brake wedge; bottle opener; serrated knife. Size, weight: 85x56x21mm, 162g.

• **A comprehensive tool suited to tourists and ride leaders. I'd take a Lezyne V10 and a Spokey**



4

**4 REVOLUTION TUNE UP MULTI 15**

£13.99

[edinburghbicycle.com](http://edinburghbicycle.com)

Budget multitools sometimes use soft steel that ruins bike fittings. This one is hardened steel, with aluminium side-plates, and everything works fine. It's like a budget Crank Brothers Multi 17. Like the Lezyne Stainless 20, the chain tool's handle is small so you need a strong grip. As there's only one position for the chain, it won't free stiff links. The chain tool has four spoke keys: 3.2, 3.3, and 3.45mm, plus one that didn't fit any wheel I own and that I couldn't measure precisely – 3.96mm, maybe? Tools: 2, 2.5, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8mm Allen keys; flat and Phillips head screwdrivers; T25 Torx; single-position chain tool; four spoke keys. Size, weight: 85x41x18mm, 160g.

• **Probably the best value hardened-steel multitool with a chain tool and spoke keys**