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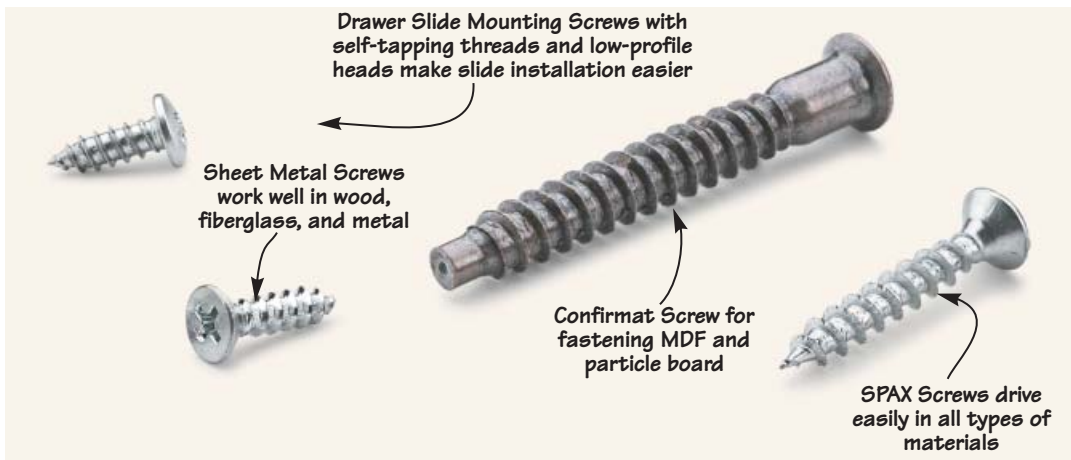
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Our Favorite Fasteners

At *ShopNotes* we like to stock up on commonly-used fasteners so we'll always have a ready supply at hand for any given project. However, the wide variety of screws and fasteners available makes it difficult to know which fasteners to buy in advance.

This problem sparked a discussion in our shop about fasteners we con-

sistently use from one project to the next. Here's a quick look at which fasteners we discovered get the most use in our shop and why.

SPAX SCREW

Obviously we use wood screws more than any other fastener in our shop. But not just any kind of wood screw. Whenever we

need to join cabinet pieces or wood components, we reach for *Spax* screws.

As you can see in the photo inset below, one of the unique features of the *Spax* screw is the serrated threads at the tip. The serrated portion of the screw is slightly wider than the remaining threads. So the serrated tip cuts a pilot hole and the rest of the threads follow with minimal friction.



▲ **Spax Screw.** The unidrive head allows the screw to be driven with Phillips, Pozidrive or Robertson (square-drive) drivers. Serrated threads at the tip of the screw make them self-tapping and easy to drive.



Sheet Metal Screw. The single lead, fine sheet metal type threads (more threads/inch) run along the entire shank of the screw. This gives them greater holding power in thin materials.

Spax screws are advertised to be driven without drilling pilot holes, which works well with softwoods. But I still drill pilot holes whenever I use them in hardwood materials.

In addition, Spax screws resist tearout in MDF and other particle board materials. So they're the most versatile fastener we have in the shop.

SHEET METAL SCREWS

For those times when you need a small screw with a lot of holding power, sheet metal screws meet the need. Their tough holding power is ideal for installing specialty hardware, like piano hinges. Or when you need to countersink hinge screws a little deeper, these screws hold well. Their



versatile thread design is perfect for wood, fiberglass, and metal.

DRAWER SLIDE SCREWS

When it comes to installing drawer slides (photo at right), you want a small screw that's easy to drive but still has the ability to hold hardware securely in place. We install a lot of *Accuride* drawer slides, so we use *Hafele* or *Accuride* screws for this task.


You'll find these fasteners have advantages over other panhead screws. They're easy to install because the screws are self-tapping and they self-center in the mounting hole. The low profile head of these screws won't interfere with the slide function.



Drawer Slide Screw. These small, self-tapping, low profile, panhead screws make it easy to install and adjust drawer slides.

CONFIRMAT SCREW

Working with MDF or melamine presents a real challenge when it comes to screws. Here, the Confirmat screw works great whenever edge-to-face joining is needed for MDF or melamine workpieces. The deep threads, oversized shank, and a head that is just a bit larger than the

shoulder of the screw makes them unique. This screw firmly holds the pieces in place and also resists pull out once it's properly installed. To install them, you'll need to drill a pilot hole through both of the workpieces. Then just insert the Confirmat screw and use an Allen wrench to drive it in, like you see in the photo on the left. Most of these fasteners can be found in your local hardware store or home center. 

◀ **Confirmat Screw.** When joining materials like MDF, this screw holds tight and resists pull out.

Fast and Functional: Trim Washers

I often use trim washers like those you see in the photo at the right when it comes to assembling shop projects. Despite their name, these simple washers are not just decorative. They can save you a bit of time and solve some other problems as well.

From a time standpoint, they eliminate the need for drilling a separate countersink — which can speed up assembly time. But more importantly, you don't have to worry about the countersink "blowing out" when you're putting in screws near an edge.

And finally, trim washers can prevent "overdriving" the screw. Which can be a problem in softer materials.



▲ **Trim Washer.** Trim washers are a great way to strengthen an assembly, especially near the edge where you may not want to countersink the screw.