

BETTER HOMES & GARDENS WOOD

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Wise Buys: Our Experts Test No-Hose Brad Nailers

Why Buy?

Eighteen-gauge brads can make project assembly a clamp-free task, and they also work great for installing trim and molding in homes. With brads, you get the length — 1 ¼" is the maximum — of a 15- or 16-gauge finish nail, but with a smaller hole to fill. Gas- or battery-powered brad nailers handle these jobs just as well as their pneumatic cousins, but without the fuss of dragging around an air compressor and hose. They also make the perfect tool for a trim carpenter returning to a job site for punch-list work.

Editor Test-Drive:

I never realized how restricted I was until I used Paslode's gas-powered brad nailer. Before, I was tethered to my air compressor and hose, but no longer! The IM200F18 drives brads — and sinks them — into any hardwood or sheet goods. Before trusting it to install trim in my house, I drove several sizes of brads in ¾" hard maple, plywood subflooring, and even 2" red oak. It never failed to sink even one brad. With that confidence, I used it to install fir baseboard, shoe molding, and door and window trim in my home, and it performed flawlessly.

The IM200F18 requires a 6-volt rechargeable battery as well as gas-filled fuel cells (replacement cells cost \$5 each). Together they spark a small explosion to drive a piston, like the engine in your car. I drove more than 1,200 nails before exhausting the first cell — without draining the battery. The nailer has an adjustable depth setting that proved easy to use, and the rubber bumper on the nose prevented dents in the wood.

Tested by Kevin Boyle, Senior Design Editor

