

Hammer Drill vs Regular Drill

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Quick answer: Use a regular drill for wood, metal, and general screw driving. Use a hammer drill if you occasionally drill into brick, block, or light concrete for anchors. If you’re drilling concrete regularly, need larger holes, or you’re chiseling, step up to a rotary hammer instead.

At a Glance

	Regular Drill	Hammer Drill	Rotary Hammer
Action	Rotation only	Rotation + impacts	Rotation + pneumatic piston
Materials	Wood, metal, plastic	Brick, block, light concrete	All masonry, heavy concrete
Bits	Twist / spade bits	Carbide masonry bits	SDS-Plus / SDS-Max bits
Typical max hole	N/A	1/2"–5/8" concrete	3/4"+ concrete
Price range	\$80–\$200	\$90–\$220	\$150–\$400+

Real Specs by Brand

Pulled directly from each manufacturer’s official spec sheets.

Regular Drill/Driver

Brand / Model	Max Torque	No-Load Speed	Weight
DeWalt DCD791B	620 in-lbs	0-550 / 0-2,000 RPM	3.4 lbs (w/ battery)
Milwaukee 2903-20	1,400 in-lbs	0-2,100 RPM	3.2 lbs (bare)
Bosch GSR12V-300N	300 in-lbs	0-460 / 0-1,750 RPM	1.6 lbs (bare)
Makita XFD131	440 in-lbs	0-500 / 0-1,900 RPM	3.8 lbs (w/ battery)

Bosch’s 12V Max platform trades torque for size/weight — a different class, not a weaker tool.

Hammer Drill

Brand / Model	Power	Torque	BPM	Speed	Weight
DeWalt DWD520	Corded 10A	—	0-56,000	0-3,500 RPM	6.0 lbs
Milwaukee 2904-20	Cordless 18V	1,400 in-lbs	0-33,000	0-2,100 RPM	3.3 lbs
Bosch GSB12V-300N	Cordless 12V	300 in-lbs	0-26,250	0-1,750 RPM	1.8 lbs
Makita XPH12Z	Cordless 18V	530 in-lbs	0-30,000	0-2,000 RPM	4.0 lbs

DWD520 is corded; the other three are cordless — factor that into weight/runtime comparisons.

Rotary Hammer (SDS-Plus)

Brand / Model	Power	Impact Energy	BPM	Speed	Weight
DeWalt DCH273B	Cordless 20V	2.1 J (~1.5 ft-lbs)	0-4,600	0-1,100 RPM	6.8 lbs
Milwaukee 2912-20	Cordless 18V	2 ft-lbs (~2.7 J)	4,800	1,330 RPM	6.8 lbs
Bosch RH328VC	Corded 8.0A	2.6 ft-lbs (~3.5 J)	0-4,000	0-900 RPM	7.7 lbs
Makita XRH01Z	Cordless 18V	1.7 ft-lbs (~2.3 J)	0-4,700	0-950 RPM	7.2 lbs

RH328VC is corded; the other three are cordless. 1 ft-lb ≈ 1.36 Joules. Verified July 2026.

When to Use Each Tool

Regular drill: Wood, metal, plastics, driving screws/fasteners. Pilot holes, cabinet work, light carpentry.

Hammer drill: Masonry, brick, or light concrete for anchor bolts, masonry screws, conduit. Holes up to 1/2"–5/8" and intermittent work.

Rotary hammer: Multiple holes in concrete, larger diameters (3/4"+), or chiseling. Faster and less fatiguing for pro-level concrete work.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

1. Using hammer mode on wood or metal — damages bits and workpieces.
2. Using the wrong bit — masonry bits in wood give poor results; metal bits in masonry blunt quickly.
3. Applying excessive pressure — hammer drills rely on impact, not force; pushing too hard overheats the bit.
4. Skipping dust extraction on concrete — silica dust is hazardous; use a shroud or HEPA vacuum for frequent work.

What to Look For When Buying

Power: Coded: 7–10 amp motors for heavy drilling. Cordless: 18V/20V brushless minimum; 36V/40V for sustained concrete work.

Chuck type: Keyed chucks hold masonry bits better under heavy load. SDS-Plus/SDS-Max for rotary hammers, sized to your bit range.

Ergonomics: Side handle, depth stop, and vibration reduction matter most on hammer drills and rotary hammers.

Dust management: Drilling concrete indoors? Prioritize vacuum-attachment compatibility or budget for a dust shroud separately.

Full guide with product picks and buying advice: buildtoolhq.com/post/hammer-drill-vs-regular-drill-which-one-do-you-need
Specifications are for guidance only. Always follow manufacturer instructions and local codes.