

Reciprocating Saw vs Jigsaw

BuildToolHQ.com | Free contractor-grade reference — print and keep in the truck

Quick answer: Buy a reciprocating saw for demolition, renovation, or cutting things already installed — studs, nail-embedded lumber, pipe, roots. Buy a jigsaw for cutting new material to shape — curves, sink cutouts, sheet goods, laminate. If you're renovating, the recip saw earns its keep first.

Tool	Stroke	Speed	Best For
Reciprocating Saw	1" – 1-1/4"	Up to 3,000 SPM	Demolition, cutting in place
Jigsaw	3/4" – 1"	Up to 3,500 SPM	Curves, clean cuts in new material

Full Comparison

	Reciprocating Saw	Jigsaw
Built for	Demolition, cutting in place	Shaping new material
Stroke length	1" – 1-1/4"	3/4" – 1"
Speed	Up to ~3,000 SPM	Up to ~3,500 SPM
Blade length	6" – 12"	3" – 4" (T-shank)
Cut quality	Rough — expect cleanup	Clean, splinter-free
Curves	No	Yes — its whole purpose
Nail-embedded wood	Yes, routinely	Kills the blade
Bevel cuts	No	Yes, to 45°
One-handed use	Yes (compact models)	No — base rides the work
Typical price	\$100 – \$250	\$80 – \$200

The 3-Question Decision Framework

- 1. Is the material already installed, or on sawhorses?** Installed — studs, pipe, posts — is recip saw territory. Loose material you're shaping is jigsaw territory.
- 2. Does the cut line curve?** Any curve, circle, or cutout in the middle of a panel means jigsaw. A recip saw cannot follow a curve.
- 3. Will anyone see the cut edge?** If the edge shows in finished work, jigsaw. If it disappears behind drywall or into a dumpster, recip saw.

Blade Selection by Brand

Half of "my saw won't cut" complaints are blade problems, not tool problems.

Reciprocating Saw Blades

Brand	Recommended Set
Milwaukee	49-22-1129 Ultimate Demolition Set (12pc)
DeWalt	DW4892 Bi-Metal Set (12pc)
Bosch	RAP7PK All-Purpose Set (7pc)
Makita	723086-A-A Assortment Pack (6pc)

Jigsaw Blades

Brand	Recommended Set
Milwaukee	49-22-1178 T-Shank Assortment (5pc)
DeWalt	DW3742C T-Shank Set (14pc)
Bosch	T18CHCL T-Shank Set (18pc)
Makita	B-06482 Universal Jigsaw Blades

T-shank only — U-shank is dead. 10 TPI down-cut for laminate, 20+ TPI for metal. Verified July 2026.

Common Mistakes

- 1. Buying a jigsaw for demolition — the most common mismatch.
- 2. Letting the recip saw shoe float — plant the shoe against the work, then cut.
- 3. Forcing a jigsaw through thick stock — past ~1-1/2" in hardwood, the blade deflects.
- 4. Cutting laminate face-up with a standard blade — flip the piece or use a down-cut blade.

Recommended Tools by Category

Every major platform makes both saws. Stay on your battery ecosystem if you have one.

Brand	Reciprocating Saw	Jigsaw
DeWalt	DCS367B Compact	DCS334B Brushless
Milwaukee	M18 FUEL Sawzall 2821-20	M18 FUEL 2737-20
Bosch	GSA18V-083B Compact	JS470E (corded benchmark)
Makita	XRJ05Z 18V LXT	XVJ03Z 18V LXT

Budget alternative: Ryobi ONE+ P519 (recip) / P5231 (jigsaw) — real ONE+ ecosystem picks. Verified July 2026.

Full guide with product picks and buying advice: buildtoolhq.com/post/reciprocating-saw-vs-jigsaw
Specifications are for guidance only. Always follow manufacturer instructions and local codes.