

Pinball Power: Tools of the Trade (*Excerpt*)

Congratulations! By purchasing your first pinball machine, you're now a bonafide member of the pinball community. After days or even weeks of searching, you finally found it! Maybe it's a 1984 Williams Space Shuttle or a 1981 Bally Eight Ball Deluxe. You can almost hear the click-clack of the flippers. You even get to play a ball or two while the seller shows you just how good a deal you're getting! The lights flash, the targets score, and the bumpers pop. You hoist this *new-to-you* pinball machine into the car and whisk it away.

Somehow, unloading your machine seems much more arduous than it did when you picked it up, but you've finally got it reassembled. The legs are reattached and leveled. The head stands upright and proud. It is finally ready for plug 'n play! You flip the switch underneath the cabinet and...nothing. You flip again, and nothing. Now what?

Chances are, if it worked before you bought it, it won't be hard to get it working again – and you won't need a degree in electrical or mechanical engineering to do it. All you need are a few tricks, some helpful tools, and your machine will be ready to go – perhaps looking a whole lot newer in the process. Starting with part one in this series, we will take you through all the fundamentals, from stocking your toolbox to expanding your collection.

Tools of the Trade

Would you be surprised to learn that you don't need many tools to work on a pinball machine? It's true! Equip yourself with these few essentials, and you will be well on your way to meeting most of your repairment needs.

Your best friends from now on are microfiber towels and a quality shop vacuum. Microfiber towels can be found anywhere auto detailing products are sold. When shopping for vacuums, look for one that has multiple brush attachments – you’ll use them both on and off the playfield!

Nut drivers and basic screwdrivers (Philips and slot head) will cover about 90 percent of your mechanical work. Most screwdriver sets contain the sizes you need, but Phillips #2 will see the most mileage. When it comes to nut drivers, consider purchasing ones that are both magnetic and extra-long in these sizes:

- Red: (1/4 inch)
- Yellow: (5/16 inch)
- Green: (11/32 inch)
- Blue: (3/8 inch)

Pro-Tip: Pinball machines use SAE (Society of Automotive Engineers) nuts and bolts – no metric tools should be required.

At some point, you’re bound to drop fasteners in the cabinet. For me, a telescoping magnetic probe is a ***must-have*** for getting those tiny parts out of tight crevices.

Standard sets of wrenches and sockets are a welcome addition, as well as a collection of pliers, specifically needle nose and curved needle nose. While you’re at it, get a range of various hex key sizes (also called Allen wrenches). I prefer the T-Handle style for comfortability.

Now that you’ve stocked your pinball toolkit with the mechanical necessities, let’s talk electric.