

Electronic Tool Tip #23 – Handheld Radio Destuffing Tool

We have *all* encountered them... and we have *all* used fine-tip needle-nose pliers, or a hemostat, or snap-ring pliers, or even a tool jury-rigged out of screwdrivers. What am I talking about? Why... stuffing nuts, of course! So... what on Earth is a stuffing nut, and what are they doing on an amateur radio? Read on...

The type of nut that I am talking about is widely used as a *packing* nut (or a *stuffing* nut) on hydraulic cylinders or actuators. That's right – those round nuts with notches in the upper surface, as shown in Figure 2. We find them on handheld radios, usually around control shaft bushings and/or antenna jacks. Most often, they are round and made of brass, aluminum, or stainless steel. Typically, they will have either two or four slots, which are often quite shallow.



Figure 1 - Destuffing tool for handheld radios

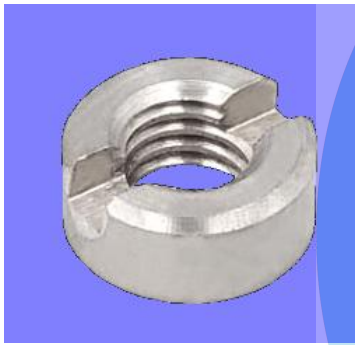


Figure 2 - Stuffing nut

These nuts have picked up several different names over the years – slotted nuts, bushing nuts, castle nuts, spanner nuts, packing nuts, and yes, stuffing nuts. The stuffing nut and packing nut term derives from the use of this type of nut to secure and adjust the cylinder rod packing (or *stuffing*) in hydraulics applications. The *castle nut* and *spanner nut* terms are in common usage in the UK.

If the act of putting the sealing material into a cylinder and then adjusting that material to seal properly is known as “*stuffing the cylinder*”, it can easily be seen, I suppose, that removal of that nut would be the act of “*destuffing*”, which gives us the name of the tool. And yes, there actually *is* a tool for this job!

The destuffing tool offers four different size/style tips, to fit various size and types of nuts. The tool that I own is equipped as follows:

- 6mm 4-notch
- 7mm 2-notch
- 9mm 4-notch
- 11mm 2-notch

The version that I just found offered online differs slightly in that the only 4-notch tip on that tool is the 9mm size; the other three are all 2-notch tools. Of course, a 2-notch tool will work on both 2-notch and 4-notch nuts. It would not bother me if all four tool tips were of the 2-notch types.

The wrench is quite handy when it comes to disassembly and reassembly of the more common Baofeng and Kenwood radios, which is exactly where I have used it. Most recently, it was useful in doing some modification work to a pair of TYT MD-UV380 radios

This tool is available online from ebay.com at a price of \$8.35 (USD) plus shipping. Of course, the government has to get its share, so tax will also be applied. Point your browser to <https://www.ebay.com/itm/204338870077> if you want to investigate this item for yourself.