

Letter and Number Drills

Use - Back in the pre metric days, twist drills were made in fractional sizes and at the lower end of the range (under 1 inch) the steps between each size were in increments of 1/64 inch. Often this step was too great for some applications, so a range of Letter and Number Drills were introduced which provided the “intermediate sizes”.

Letter Drills – All 26 letters of the alphabet are used, ranging from A (5.94 mm) to Z (10.50 mm)

Number Drills - Normal Range - No. 1 (5.8 mm) to No. 60 (1.02mm). Additionally, for those with strong nerves and even stronger eyesight there is the Extended Range - No. 61 (1.00mm) to No. 80 (0.35 mm) or “14 thou” in old money!

You can still purchase drills in Imperial sizes, and now with Metric sizes, getting the right size drill for a particular application is much better. However, for those that build model boats, and other types of models, will find the incremental steps within the range of Letter and Number drills, extremely useful, particularly the Number range.

For those more used to Imperial measurements, a few basic conversions:

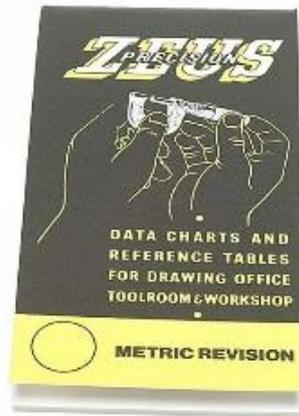
- 1 inch = 25.4 mm
- 1mm = 0.040 inch *or if you prefer, 40 thou.*
- 5/16 inch is almost exactly 8 mm
- 5/8 inch is almost exactly 16 mm

And finally, for those that remember the thickness of sheet metal being quoted in SWG (Standard Wire Gauge), by some fluke 16 SWG is the same as 1/16 inch AND 1.6 mm

Purchasing – For all drills and associated tooling, I always recommend a company called Tracy Tools based in Torquay. Their drills and other items such as taps and dies are of good quality and reasonably priced. The model engineering fraternity have been using them for years and for those that attend the London Model Engineering Show held at Alexandra Palace each January may be aware that Tracy Tools always have a stand there.

www.tracytools.com

Which drill do I need? – The internet will provide the sizes of both Letter and Number drills, but for a quick reference in the workshop I recommend a set of Zeus Tables. These also contain data on screw threads such as tapping drill sizes and also thread diameters and pitches to aid thread identification. *About £6 to purchase.*



David Marks – August 2020