

Tool Time

Hose clamps are like cops: There never seems to be one around when you need it. Even when a clamp is available, it usually is too small or too big to complete the task at hand. But this wouldn't be a problem if you had a ClampTite, an ingenious little tool that can transform various types of wire—safety wire, bailing wire or even light coathangers—into tight, secure clamps in a matter of minutes. About the size and shape of a pen, the ClampTite consists of two main pieces: a hollow body and an inner shaft that can move up and down within the body. A wide steel pin is press-fit through each piece, and the inner shaft is threaded, its movement within the body controlled by a wingnut.

There is more than one way to fashion a clamp with this tool, depending upon whether the job calls for a single wrap of wire or multiple wraps. The included instructions use text, photos and illustrations to describe the required procedures, so I won't try to replicate them in detail here. Making a single-loop clamp involves looping the wire around the object to be secured, then wrapping one end around the pin on the main body and the other end around the pin on the inner shaft. A multi-loop clamp requires a slightly different method in which a short portion of the wire between the loops is inserted into a notch on the pointed nose of the body, with the two ends wrapped around the pin on the inner shaft. In either case, you then turn the wingnut clockwise, which moves the two pins (or the inner shaft's pin and the body's nose) farther apart, thereby pulling the wire ever tighter around the object until a secure clamping force is created. To finish, either rotate the entire tool 180 degrees laterally (for a single loop) or flip it 180 degrees horizontally (for multiple loops), either of which bends the wire in a way that locks the clamp. You then just clip the excess wire off the ends and the job is finished.

ClampTite is available in various models and prices ranging from \$30 to \$100 depending upon its size and the materials used in its construction (plated steel, stainless steel, aluminum). I've been using the \$40 aluminum-and-stainless unit pictured here, which, at just under 5 inches in length, is ideal for inclusion in an on- or off-road toolkit. You can check it out at www.clamptite.com or by calling 800/962-2901.

The ClampTite pulls the wire until it is very snug (above), then is flipped over (right) to further tighten the clamp and lock the wire in place. The process seems complex but becomes quite simple as you use the tool for the first time.