Common Fastener Types

Hex bolts, or hex cap screws, are used in machinery and construction. Can be used with a nut, or in a tapped hole. Fully threaded hex bolts are also known as tap bolts.

Wood screws have large threads and a smooth Shank for pulling two pieces of material together. They can be used in wood and other soft materials.

Sheet metal screws have sharp points and threads, and are designed to be driven directly into sheet metal. They can also be used in softer materials like plastic, fiberglass, or wood.

Machine screws are fully threaded for use with a nut or in a tapped hole. Certain types are sometimes referred to as stove bolts.

Socket screws are machine screws with an internal hex socket (Allen) drive. Longer lengths may have a smooth Shank.

Lag bolts, or lag screws, are large wood screws with hex heads. Typically used for wood construction and landscaping.

Carriage bolts have smooth, domed heads with a square section underneath that pulls into the material to prevent spinning during installation.

Nuts are used to fasten machine threaded fasteners in through-hole applications. Lock nuts help prevent loosening.

Washers spread the load over a greater surface area when tightening a bolt, screw or nut. Lock washers help preventing loosening.

Tip: Find a more comprehensive fastener type chart at http://boltdepot.com/info

Grade / Class and Fastener Strength

Fastener Grade (US) or Class (metric) refers to the mechanical properties of the fastener material. Generally, a higher number indicates a stronger, more hardened (but also more brittle) fastener.

For a chart of fastener grades, head markings and mechanical properties, see Bolt Depot’s Grade markings and Strength Chart at http://boltdepot.com/info

US bolt head markings

- Grade 2
- Grade 5
- Grade 8

Metric bolt head markings

- 8.8
- 10.9
- 12.9
- Class 8.8
- Class 10.9
- Class 12.9

Note: In addition to these markings, the head will often have a manufacturer stamp.

Fastener Materials

Note: Do not rely on this guide for color-matching. The appearance of these materials sometimes differs significantly from the photos below.

Zinc-plated steel is a low carbon steel for general use. Relatively inexpensive, with the zinc plating providing moderate corrosion resistance suitable for indoors or otherwise dry conditions. Color is either a blue-ish tint or yellow depending on the exact process.

Hot-dipped galvanized steel has a thicker zinc coating for better corrosion resistance, making it suitable for outdoor use. Because of the thick plating, only galvanized nuts and washers will fit galvanized bolts. The coating typically has a rough, dull grey finish.

Stainless steel offers good corrosion resistance, making it suitable for outdoor and marine applications, but is more expensive than zinc plated.

Chrome and nickel plated steel are smooth and polished for appearance. The plating offers moderate corrosion resistance.

Brass and bronze are copper alloys with good corrosion resistance. More expensive than steel, these materials are typically used for decorative applications. Colors can vary significantly.

Alloy steel is highly hardened and usually black oxide and/or oil coated, offering little corrosion resistance.
How Fasteners are Notated: An Example

Machine screws, Phillips pan head, Stainless steel 18-8, #12-24 x 1"