Choosing a 3 Jaw Puller

With the multitude of 3 jaw pullers on the market we are going to just hit one the major pullers in the class. When choosing a 3 jaw puller you need to ask yourself:

1) How often am I going to be using the puller?

2) How long has this part been on the engine and is it pressed on?

3) What is the spread and depth that I actually need?

To prevent damage to whatever puller you choose, make sure the threads have a thick coating of extreme pressure lubricant. I know I have done it but a three jaw puller is not intended to be used with an impact. If you use an impact and break a jaw or pull the threads do not blame the puller.

The best practice for use is to choose the correct size puller for the job. If possible choose a puller a little larger over a small puller spread to its max. Then place the puller on the object needing pulled and slowly remove the slack from the puller until semi-tight. When the puller is semi-tight, readjust the legs so than everything is centered on what you are pulling. You do not want your puller at an angle. Using a wrench or ratchet slowly tighten the forcing screw. If you feel the part moving then finish removing it. When you feel the puller go tight, it is like you hit a brick wall then stop. You can spray a little penetrating oil on the part or even apply heat. I have sprayed a part and left it under
tension overnight to come in to work in the morning to find my puller on the ground and the part loose. If it is not moving hitting the puller with an impact sometimes works but often just breaks the puller. Most pullers have a point on the end to bite into what they are pulling. If you are pulling something that you do not want to mark up, I have wrapped a couple of washers in masking tape and put under the point. This protected the surface that the forcing screw was pushing on.

Let us take a minute and go over the different types of three jaw pullers.

This (image 1) is your typical import tool store cheap 3 jaw puller. It will work in some cases. Just make sure if you are using it to wear safety glasses and have a paid up life insurance policy. Note this puller can only be used in the 3 jaw configuration.
This (image 2) is what a small three jaw puller should look like. T&E puts out a great line of pullers. This puller has fine threads, adjustable for both 3 & 2 jaw capabilities, second set of holes to shorten and lengthen the reach of the puller. This is a perfect all around puller.
When I was writing this blog, I was trying to decide between using the T&E basic 3 jaw (image 3) and the OTC 3 jaw (image 4). Both are wonderful pullers and decide to go with the T&E. I happened to be re-boxing the OTC when I noticed that OTC has removed the second set of holes from the puller legs. I am not sure why if it was to save a few pennies on manufacturing the legs this is just not the quality I would expect from OTC.

Sorry about the rust (image 5). This is a used puller that came into our store a while ago. Please take care of your tools. Now on to the puller, this puller is going to go home with me after this blog. It is a quick change 2 & 3 jaw puller by T&E Tools. No more removing nuts and bolts to change your puller over. Just loosen the large silver screw and pop the
legs out and reposition in the desired configuration. This is so nice. I guarantee you that I will have this puller all cleaned up and will be treating her like the jewel she is.

I personally have never used one of these (image 6) pullers short of just playing with one. This is an internal hydraulic press puller. Just tighten the puller down securely and tighten the little t-bar. This puller applies several tons of pulling strength from the internal hydraulic ram. This is something I really want to try but is a little out of the price range for the home mechanic that breaks more than he fixes (me).
Last but not least – (image 7) – the king daddy of heavy duty pullers. This is the posi-lock puller. The cage keeps the legs from flying loose and keeps the puller locked on the part. These pullers are great. Now the bad part. We do not carry these any longer at Apex Tool Company because they are unbelievably expensive. It is a great puller but you can pay someone to fix it for you cheaper than buying one of these. If you use a puller all the time on construction or agriculture equipment, then this is the puller for you.

Seriously everyone, please be careful using a 2 or 3 jaw puller. All joking aside, the forces being exerted on the legs and the part you are pulling is enormous. I know, we all like watching the You Tube videos of things going wrong. Trust me you do not want to be the star of the next viral video. Just like using a press, these pullers can break and parts go flying like a little bomb went off. Remember – safety first.

Thanks for taking the time to look at my blog, and as always happy wrenching.

Fred Neff