

Wood Screw Pilot Hole Chart

Pilot & clearance hole sizes for #4–#14 wood screws · fraction and mm

SCREW	SOFTWOOD PILOT		HARDWOOD PILOT		CLEARANCE HOLE	
#4	1/16"	1.6 mm	5/64"	2.0 mm	1/8"	3.2 mm
#6	5/64"	2.0 mm	3/32"	2.4 mm	9/64"	3.6 mm
#8	7/64"	2.8 mm	1/8"	3.2 mm	11/64"	4.4 mm
#10	1/8"	3.2 mm	9/64"	3.6 mm	3/16"	4.8 mm
#12	9/64"	3.6 mm	5/32"	4.0 mm	7/32"	5.6 mm
#14	5/32"	4.0 mm	11/64"	4.4 mm	1/4"	6.4 mm

Softwood / Hardwood = the pilot hole, drilled in the base piece. Plywood follows the softwood column; MDF follows the hardwood column (use fine-thread screws in MDF).

Clearance = the shank hole in the top board, so the screw slips through and pulls the joint tight. It is sized a touch larger than the shank on purpose.

Sizes are straight-bit pilot dimensions for modern wood screws, cross-referenced across Bolt Depot, McFeely's and WorkshopCalc. When in doubt, start one size smaller and test on scrap.