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Socket sizes: metric and SAE

Which common inch socket is nearest each metric one, and how far off it really is.

Metric	Nearest common SAE	Inch socket in mm	Difference	Verdict
6 mm	1/4 in	6.35 mm	+0.35 mm	close, use care
7 mm	1/4 in	6.35 mm	-0.65 mm	**do not use**
8 mm	5/16 in	7.94 mm	-0.06 mm	interchangeable
9 mm	3/8 in	9.53 mm	+0.53 mm	**do not use**
10 mm	3/8 in	9.53 mm	-0.47 mm	**do not use**
11 mm	7/16 in	11.11 mm	+0.11 mm	interchangeable
12 mm	1/2 in	12.70 mm	+0.70 mm	**do not use**
13 mm	1/2 in	12.70 mm	-0.30 mm	close, use care
14 mm	9/16 in	14.29 mm	+0.29 mm	close, use care
15 mm	9/16 in	14.29 mm	-0.71 mm	**do not use**
16 mm	5/8 in	15.88 mm	-0.12 mm	interchangeable
17 mm	11/16 in	17.46 mm	+0.46 mm	**do not use**
18 mm	11/16 in	17.46 mm	-0.54 mm	**do not use**
19 mm	3/4 in	19.05 mm	+0.05 mm	interchangeable
20 mm	13/16 in	20.64 mm	+0.64 mm	**do not use**
21 mm	13/16 in	20.64 mm	-0.36 mm	close, use care
22 mm	7/8 in	22.23 mm	+0.23 mm	close, use care
23 mm	7/8 in	22.23 mm	-0.77 mm	**do not use**
24 mm	15/16 in	23.81 mm	-0.19 mm	interchangeable

What the difference means

Under 0.2 mm the two sizes are near enough to swap. Most people never notice.

From 0.2 to 0.45 mm it may go on, but it can round off a tight or rusted fastener.

Over 0.45 mm it is loose or will not go on at all. Use the right size or you will strip the head.

A plus means the inch socket is bigger than the metric size. A minus means it is smaller and may be a tight fit.

A six point socket grips far better than a twelve point on anything stuck.

Figures are calculated from 1 inch = 25.4 mm, rounded to the nearest hundredth of a millimeter. Differences use the rounded figure.