

## **Grip it and Rip it**

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Though their name includes the word “mini”, mini excavators still pack a big punch. These machines have the power, stability and versatility – all wrapped in a smaller package – to tackle tough jobs in tight spaces. While normally outfitted with a bucket, mini excavators have the potential to increase their versatility with different attachments, including thumbs and rippers.

Learning more about these attachments can help you decide whether or not it’s the right fit for you and your jobsite.

### **Benefits and Common Uses**

One of the most popular attachments for mini excavators, a thumb attachment is primarily used for picking up materials, large and small, including rocks, stumps, steel, scraps, debris, etc. The thumb engages the bucket and uses it to pick up materials and easily transport them elsewhere.

Take a look at your hand, and imagine picking something up without your thumb. Sounds difficult, right? It’s the same for equipment. A thumb attachment allows operators to grasp and pick up objects much easier, maximizing a mini excavator’s versatility.

Another attachment for mini excavators, a ripper, is a giant steel, replaceable, single-point tooth that’s primarily used for breaking frost and clay. Rippers are able to penetrate and scarify hard ground conditions, and can rip through tough, hard-packed and frozen materials with ease. Rippers are commonly used in a variety of projects, ranging from site prep, residential and utility work.

### **Direct-link and Rigid Thumbs**

There are two variations of thumbs that are available for mini excavators: a rigid thumb and a direct-link thumb. A direct-link thumb uses hydraulics for pressure in grabbing materials, so direct-link thumb attachments must be used with a two-way hydraulic system with hydraulic lines available on the machine. The rigid thumb does not require hydraulics; it is in a fixed position. The operator grabs the material by crowding the bucket.

An important thing to note when choosing a thumb is making sure it matches up with the pin-to-tip radius of the machine. You want to ensure the bucket and thumb are compatible, teeth and thumb tines properly integrate (proper spacing), and the thumb tines do not extend too far beyond the lip to avoid interference with the stick and cab.

Rippers also come in a variety of styles and sizes, depending on the manufacturer and size of machine being used.

Attachments have the potential to expand the versatility of the already agile and flexible mini excavator; however, both rippers and thumbs have the ability to increase your machine’s productivity.

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