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## A Smart Bluetooth Laser Measure

BY BRUCE GREENLAW

After reviewing 18 laser measures over the past three years, I think that small refinements are now making the biggest splash. When Bosch introduced the economical and feature-rich GLM 50 C laser measure late last year, key selling points included a bold new display and intuitive menu navigation. I've been evaluating this laser for a couple of months, and for me it sets a new standard for ease of use.

### STANDALONE FUNCTIONS

The GLM 50 C can measure lengths from about 6 inches to 165 feet. It is accurate to  $\pm 1/16$  inch and shows fractions down to  $1/32$  inch. The backlit display shows bold white numbers on a dark-blue background instead of the usual black on white; this advanced display is easier to read in most interiors but can be harder to read in the bright outdoors. Given that these laser measures are mostly used indoors, that's a reasonable trade-off. The display can be set to rotate automatically for an easy read regardless of orientation.

The GLM 50 C offers many of the same functions as competing models. You can measure a distance by simply pointing and clicking, or take a continuous reading while moving toward or away from a target and click when you're ready to hold a measurement, which also freezes the minimum and maximum distance measured (Bosch calls this the "Real Time" mode). But the former is usually the default mode when you power up most laser measures, while the latter is usually a menu option. With the GLM 50 C, however, Real Time is the default mode so the laser more closely mimics a tape measure. In Real Time, you can also either display the numbers in a large font with the minimum and maximum measurements omitted for an easier read, or display them in a smaller font along with the minimum and maximum.

The GLM 50 C can also calculate square and cubic feet, add or subtract dimensions and calculations, and lay out a series of equal intervals. A built-in inclinometer provides digital leveling, but it also works in the background to make indirect vertical or horizontal measuring exceptionally easy where direct measurements are impractical or impossible. The laser's memory stores the last 30 dimensions or calculations in order, and you can delete individual entries or the entire memory.

During my target practice, I seemed to burn through the two included AAA alkaline batteries in a hurry. Switching to AAA lithium batteries would probably help. Too bad the device isn't powered by a rechargeable lithium-ion battery, as is the longer-range Bosch GLM 100 C.



### EASY MENUS

Unlike other deluxe laser measures I've tested, the new GLM 50 C is a joy to navigate. Other than the measuring-reference button (which sets the device to measure from the front, the back, or the tripod socket) and the Bluetooth button, all basic settings and measuring functions live under the function button. Quickly press and release this button, and a revolving menu shows the measurement options plus the memory. You cycle through this menu by pressing the + or - buttons, then select a mode by hitting the function or measure button. Press the function button for about a second instead, and another revolving menu allows you to, for instance, turn on the bold Real Time display or switch the units to metric.

Thankfully, there is only one button combination required; when viewing the memory, you can wipe it clean by quickly pressing and releasing the clear/on/off button while holding down the measuring-reference button.

### CONNECTIVITY

Bosch offers two free apps that let the laser interact with compatible iOS and Android devices. With my iPhone 6, I downloaded the "GLM measure&document" app and gave it a workout. The Bosch manual doesn't address the apps, so I learned to use this one by tapping the help icons.

The GLM measure&document app can manage your measurements in various ways. For instance, you can quickly transfer the laser's memory to your mobile device, where you can delete or name individual measurements, perform calculations, and email the edited list as an Excel spreadsheet. Raising the bar, you can create and name a project folder, snap photos with your mobile device, draw dimension lines on the photos with a finger, and then shoot the measurements with the laser measure. Follow the simple rules, and the app places these measurements next to the appropriate dimension lines while also listing them under a separate tab. You can drop text and audio memos into each photo, where they appear as virtual Post-it notes.

When you're ready, you can email a PDF of the project that includes everything but your audio memos. You can even insert your company logo and address. I created several test projects and emailed the PDFs and spreadsheets to my laptop easily. You can also email the labeled photos or the measurement list separately.

I did encounter a couple of minor glitches with this app. For instance, it showed 5'4" as 5'3". Also, the app's calculator defaults to metric during some operations.

### THE BOTTOM LINE

I wish the Bosch GLM 50 C had a rechargeable battery, and you need to press the buttons firmly to register all of your entries. But this laser measure is a breeze to use, offers all the measuring functions I can imagine needing, and has a Bluetooth module that makes it easier to manage and share measurements. The standard \$150 price tag would work for me, but the laser currently costs even less at amazon.com.

*Bruce Greenlaw is a contributing editor to JLC and Tools of the Trade.*



**Easy-to-use navigation and Bluetooth functionality.** The two revolving menus are easy to access and navigate (top). Thanks to a Bluetooth Smart module and two free Bosch apps, the GLM 50 C can pair with mobile devices to expand its capabilities (above).

### GLM 50 C Specs

**Power:** two AAA batteries  
**Range:** 6 inches to 165 feet  
**Accuracy:**  $\pm 1/16$  inch  
**Smallest fraction:**  $1/32$  inch  
**Price:** \$150  
**Included in kit:** two AAA batteries, hand strap, belt pouch, target cards  
**Warranty:** 1 year (2 years if registered), 30-day money-back guarantee

Top photo by Bruce Greenlaw