

How to Organize Your Garage

At one time, garages were simply shelters for the Chevy—places of refuge from hailstones and harsh sun. Those days are gone. Today’s garages are multipurpose rooms, the first choice for storing whatever can’t be hidden in the house.

“Garages today are often the first room you see when you even a house, and the last room you see when you leave,” says Steve Cargile, owner of Home Storage Systems, a company that specializes in designing and building garage cabinetry, benches and flooring. “Most homeowners want the garage to look like a part of the home. So we analyze their storage needs and then design cabinetry, overhead racks and colored apogee flooring to expand their living space.”

He offers this advice to homeowners who want to reclaim their garage space:

- **First, clear out the clutter.** Although it may seem obvious, back the car out. And don’t forget the motorcycle, the bicycles, the boat and any other type of transport you may have parked there, he says. As you clear the garage, sort the stuff”, he adds. “Chances are, you’ll discover lots that you don’t need.”
- **Next, place all like items together,** he says. “You don’t need to store a plastic Santa and a garage hose together,” Mr. Cargile explains. “By putting related items together, you’ll be able to find the things you need and less inclined to toss everything together into one big mess.” Mr. Cargile recommends storing seasonal items in easily assessable locations. Overhead storage is a good option for items that are used less frequently.
- **Then, make more room,** he says. “Add shelves and cabinetry,” he adds. “That will ensure that your vehicle will fit in the garage.” Because your needs will change as you acquire or replace tools and other equipment, it’s a good idea to get storage solutions that can be adapted to changing circumstances. If you get shelving, make sure it’s adjustable, he says. It’s also simple to rearrange tools hanging on a pegboard. If you have a lot of lawn equipment, it might be worthwhile to build a storage shed to store your mower, weed trimmer, leaf blower, gas containers and other large items.
- **Finally, designate a trash area.** Remember the old saying: When in doubt, throw it out. This is not a time to be sentimental. The biggest waste of space might be broken items. If you haven’t fixed that broken television, stereo or power tool by now, you’re never going to. Toss it. “After you’ve found a place for everything in your garage, you’ve got to have a place for everything you no longer want, and the best place is the trash,” he says. “My advice is, don’t get too sentimental over things. If you see something that’s covered in dust, chances are it’s not that meaningful. Throw it out!”

After you’ve conquered the mess, some good habits can keep the clutter from sneaking up on you again. Use masking tape to mark a designated area for items such as children’s toys, bicycles and lawn mowers. Keep a trash container by your workbench to keep sawdust, wrappers or useless blocks of wood from cluttering the space. And finally—and perhaps most important—make a habit of always returning everything to its proper place after you’ve finished using it.