

How to Set Up a Woodshop



by eHow Home & Garden Editor

Introduction

Woodworkers, rejoice! You finally have enough room to get your tools out of the toolbox (and shed and car) and set up your own shop. Plan thoughtfully to accommodate all your equipment, but remember: there is no such thing as a dream shop. The perfect setup is one that works just right for you, your projects and your budget.

Instructions

Difficulty: Moderate

Steps

1 Step One

Glean ideas from other woodworkers about optimal shop layouts and tool configurations. Keep in mind that you can always make adjustments to suit changing needs and to fit in new tools. If necessary, start small and invest in quality tools as you expand.

2 Step Two

Follow the "rule of plenty." Design as much space, light, ventilation, power, work surfaces and storage in the layout as possible.

3 Step Three

Build or buy as solid and as well equipped a workbench as you can afford in terms of space and money. The bench is your shop's most important element, so it should suit you perfectly.

4 Step Four

Organize tools by task in drawers and cabinets, and label them. Put all pliers in one drawer, hammers in another, measuring tools (tape, stick, chalk line, plumb bob) in a third. See 57 Live Better Through Labeling.

5 Step Five

Mount Peg-Board on open wall space and above the workbench to hold frequently used tools. Outline tools with a permanent marker to make it easy to put tools back in the proper place.

6 Step Six

Lay out equipment so that you can work easily and safely. To use a table saw, joiner or planer, for example, you need a space that's 18 feet (5.4 m) long and not less than 10 feet (3 m) wide in order to be able to push a full sheet of plywood through. If you have to make do with a small space, buy portable tools that roll into the driveway while you use them.

7 Step Seven

Install plenty of grounded outlets at floor level and along the workbench to minimize overlapping cords and to avoid having to extend cords so far that you're working with no slack. Put in a retractable electric cord that drops from the ceiling for use with hand tools. Install dedicated circuits with sufficient power for high-amperage power tools such as table saws, band saws, drill presses and radial-arm saws.

8 Step Eight

Store all your tool manuals in a three-ring binder. Keep receipts and warranties in an envelope with the manuals. See 100 Manage Warranty Documents.

9 Step Nine

Hang sawhorses from the studs to keep them out of the way. Build a lumber rack to store sheets of plywood.

10 Step Ten

Install task lighting for the workbench and floor tools (such as the drill press and band saw). Make sure the lights shine on the work area and not in your face.

11 Step Eleven

Give careful consideration to dust control in your shop. Airborne sawdust can set off smoke detectors--and even explode--so make sure your system collects sawdust and keeps the shop clean. Adequate ventilation will prevent the buildup of fumes and airborne contaminants as well as lower the

humidity to keep wood from warping.

12 Step Twelve

Paint concrete floors with nonskid epoxy paint. Lay a carpet square at your bench or, better, an ergonomic standing mat to make it more comfortable to work standing up for long periods of time. (Shop Ergoboy.com and other ergonomic specialty stores.)

13 Step Thirteen

Equip your workshop with a smoke detector, a fire extinguisher and a first aid kit (see 466 Assemble Emergency Kits).

Overall Tips & Warnings

Secure Peg-Board hooks with a dab of hot glue or silicone caulk.

Store ladders horizontally so kids aren't tempted to climb them.

Don't forget to leave room for the boom box.

If you're patient and love the hunt, poke around older pharmacies or typesetting houses for banks of drawers that aren't being used anymore. They're beautiful and well made, and they have infinite numbers of small storage spaces.

For safety, store circular-saw blades in old record album covers. Slit a length of old garden hose to slip over the teeth of handsaws.

Pour a thin layer of linseed oil on top of oil-based paint before you store it. (Don't mix it in.) For latex paints, transfer leftover paint to smaller cans, available at paint stores. Mark the color, room and date on all paint cans. See 145 Store Paint and Other Hazardous Materials.

Buy a 2-gallon (7.5 l) wetdry shop vacuum and keep it handy in your workshop. Some vacuums will also attach to the dust ports on power tools.

Consider putting a keyed electrical circuit in your workshop if you have dangerous power tools and small children.

Unplug power tools and coil up their cords when they're not in use.

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