

SET UP
Your
SEWING
WORKSPACE



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Free Guide

How to Set-up a Sewing Workspace

If you're like me you know the frustration of having to pack up all the pieces of the project you're working on, to put dinner on the table.

Imagine a **special place where you can disappear, sew uninterrupted for hours,** or until your project is totally finished. Or, just think about a place where those unfinished projects can lie undisturbed until you can pick them up again. Sounds wonderful, doesn't it?

Nothing sparks your artistic creativity as much as a special place to sew with carefully organized sewing equipment stored where it's easily accessible. Additionally, it saves time. You can finish your project sooner when you avoid searching for every tool you need.

Sewing is more enjoyable and much easier when you have a permanent place to sew with everything within your reach. However, not everyone is able to furnish an entire room to spark your creativity. Sometimes, you have to deal with what you have:

- **small apartments**
- **growing families**
- **budget requirements**
- **space restrictions**

Master your creativity, have more fun and avoid the annoying, time-consuming task of finding a place to sew.

Whether your sewing space is large or small, or if you are lucky enough to dedicate an entire room for sewing, there are a number of things for you to consider when you design your sewing area or room. Choose an area with the following in mind:

- **Size of the space**
- **Lighting**
- **Electrical Outlets**
- **Flooring**
- **Shelving and Storage**

Especially **important is accessibility to electrical outlets and adequate lighting.** Also, you should think about the noise factor; will the sound of your machine

distract others? And, try to find a place where you can locate yourself without interfacing with the activities of the other members of the household.

All you really need to set-up your sewing workspace is:

- a stable surface to hold your sewing machine
- a flat surface to lay-out and cut-out your fabric
- storage space for sewing equipment and fabric
- a tabletop ironing board

An efficient way to organize is according to sewing task. Sewing basically involves three major activities:

- layout/cutting
- stitching
- pressing

Therefore, a real practical, time-saving method is to arrange these three work stations in your sewing area similar to the work triangle kitchen planners use to locate range, sink, and refrigerator.

- Draw out the dimensions of the room on graph paper.
- Cut-out cardboard pieces to represent furniture pieces.
- Use computer software to design the space or room.
- Start moving the furniture pieces around the room on graph paper until you find the best layout with the “work triangle”, lighting and electrical outlets in mind

Assemble all of your equipment and supplies that relate specifically to each one of the above sewing activities. Keep them handy to the area using the least amount of steps required if all of the most used surfaces are located within a triangle.

You also need storage space because the desire to create something from nothing; something unique and original, keeps you in the mood to collect items for future sewing projects. You are literally always thinking of what your next project will be, so you have:

- a stockpile of fabrics
- trims
- interfacings
- notions
- patterns

These collected items require storage containers and modular units, like those used for kitchens and closets, also works well in a sewing area. Wall shelves in many variations can be used to keep supplies out of the way but within reach. Make selections that are suitable to the size of your sewing space. It's wise to allow room for hanging your garments and unfinished projects by using the open shelving as a hanging surface. Hang folded fabric over padded suit hangers, place in drawers, or a cedar chest.

Use wall-mounted racks and hooks for small items such as scissors, lint brush, and rolls of tape. A hanging thread rack keeps thread upright and visible. Other small items can be stored in a sportsman's tackle box with stepped trays or a utility box with clear plastic drawers.

Your sewing machine should have enough flat work surface around it to rest and support your fabric. To make it easy to get between sewing machine, serger, and other work areas, use a rolling office chair which can be adjusted for your height and comfort.

Layout/cutting area

Fabric layout, handling and cutting usually requires a work surface of about 3 by 6 feet. You can make it from plywood or use a hollow door that's large enough for laying fabric flat. If you use a smaller surface, like a dining table or bed you should use a cutting board to protect your surface. Cutting boards are available in a fold out cardboard and roll out durable plastic easy for storing under a bed or in a closet when not in use. Both cutting boards provide ruler-like guidelines which can be used for measuring, cutting square corners and aid in straightening grainlines. A magnetic pin cushion grabs pins for faster cleanup. Your cutting shears and other sharp objects should be stored to protect the blades and points. Again, those clear, plastic containers make it possible to see what is stored and conveniently in reach.

Pressing area

Pressing your garment is important at every stage of sewing to get the professional look you want. For convenience, it is best when the ironing board, iron and other pressing tools are very close to the sewing area, and also encourages the good habit of pressing as you sew. Another option is to place a tabletop ironing board near your sewing machine if a full-size ironing board takes up too much space. The steam/spray iron, hand steamer, and pressing tools (such as tailor's ham, sleeve board, point presser/clapper, seam roll, and press cloths) can be stored within arm's reach.

Storage

Sometimes a little extra storage is all you will need in your sewing area to function more efficiently. One practical solution is to group similar items such as buttons, trims, zippers, and threads in see-through containers so you can see immediately what you have and where it is. Some considerations for storage furniture are:

1. kitchen cabinets
2. unfinished furniture
3. closet units

Cover your fabric with sheeting or acid-free tissue paper, not plastic, to store on a long-term basis. Recycle paper towel tubes and aluminum foil cardboard tubes by rolling fusible interfacings on these tubes for storage without wrinkling.

Below are descriptions of several variations of sewing areas suggested by Vogue, but remember that the possibilities for providing creative sewing space are unlimited once you have thoughtfully evaluated your specific needs and available space.

SEWING CORNER or CUBBYHOLE may be the ideal solution if your only available space is a blank wall or a bare corner. Simply apply a little handy work to create a versatile sewing hideout. Place a small table against the wall and suspend a pegboard above. Stash sewing equipment which can't be hung on the board in a small chest. Locate it next to your table to provide greater working surface. For additional storage, purchase a variety of rattan baskets and chests to hold your fabrics and other bulky items. Find space in a nearby closet for your unfinished garments, ironing board, and portable sewing machine. Once the materials have been organized, coordinate the décor with the rest of the room for an attractive addition to your home.

A CLOSET may provide a perfect opportunity to create a sewing haven. Inside, put up shelves for your sewing equipment. Hinge one end of a large board to the lower shelf and use a chest the appropriate height mounted on wheels to support the opposite end. It will serve as storage space for your sewing machine and roll neatly into the lower portion of the closet when the board is folded up and the door is closed. Voila! You now possess a convenient and compact sewing area.

SHARING A ROOM with your husband's hobby or with guest accommodations may be the closest you will come to having a sewing hideaway of your own. Take advantage of the space to build storage cabinets and handy conveniences directly into the structure of the room, such as the bookcase or a decorative divider. Half of the case serves the needs of the den, while the other portion provides necessary space for your books, patterns, additional small tools, etc. Easy accessibility to all your equipment is an absolute must and the shelves [laced against the wall are a beautiful solution. Use them for your bulkier items and avoid dust with colorful roll-up shades. Add decorative touches to make your work more enjoyable.

Let's review. To simplify the planning of your area and to stimulate your own ingenuity, here are some necessities for optimum sewing conditions:

1. **Good lighting**, both natural and artificial, is absolutely essential in a sewing room or area.
 - Lots of natural light is ideal, but not always possible
 - Track-lighting, or some overhead light for general lighting and a high-intensity lamp for a direct beam to make small detail work easier.

- Make sure no shadows are cast on the work area from any lights.
 - Portable, flexible, adjustable lamps are great and can be clamped onto the work table and moved around to the desired location.
2. Convenient ample, **grounded outlets for all your electrical equipment** are necessities. Many sewers are unaware of how much power is needed in a sewing room. You need outlets for:
 - Lights
 - Sewing machine
 - Iron
 - Television and VCR (a long sewing stretch can get pretty boring without the distraction of a TV. This is a great time to catch up on taped programs.)
 3. You will also need a **cutting table**. The ideal table should be accessible from all 4 sides, hard surfaced, and high enough to avoid stooping or bending while cutting. If you do not have a specific table to use for cutting, you can easily create one in a variety of ways:
 - Purchase an inexpensive folding table from a business supply store
 - A hollow door, cut plywood, or counter top from a hardwood store attached to two sawhorses, padded and covered.
 - Temporary, use the floor or bed, as a cutting surface, with a cardboard cutting board to help prevent fabric from becoming soiled and bedding from damage.
 4. **Your sewing machine area should be at least wide enough to enable free movement of your fabric and room to place your tools.**
 - Machine attachments, presser feet, replacement needles, instruction manual, and maintenance tools nearby.
 - If you have an overlock machine/serger, keep it next to your conventional machine. Both should be ready to use when working on a sewing project. Keep thread and sewing shears near the machines.
 5. An **office chair rolls easily between machines and other work areas.** Choose one that will allow you to set it at a comfortable height to provide proper support during either hand or machine stitching.
 6. **Avoid wasting valuable time** in search for a needed item by organizing a carefully planned system:
 - roll-out drawers for fabrics, notions and patterns
 - see-thru containers to group similar items: buttons, trims, zippers, threads so you can see at once what you have and where it is.
 - keep all materials for a specific sewing project – pattern, fabric and notions – together in a separate container for easy access.
 - keep another toteable container next to your sewing machine filled with your shears, pins, seam clipper, tape measure and other sewing notions to move from one work area to another to really save time.

- other small items can be stored in a sportsman's tackle box with stepped trays or a utility box with clear plastic drawers.
7. **Pressing is important at every sewing stage.** A well-organized pressing station is essential for professional sewing results:
 - tabletop ironing board near your sewing machine
 - steam/spray iron, and/or hand steamer
 - pressing tools: tailor's ham, sleeve board, point presser/clapper, seam roll, and press cloths, can be stored within arm's reach.
 8. Provide closet space for hanging nearly finished projects and clothes requiring repair
 9. A full-length mirror near adequate lighting will assist you in accurately determining the fit of a garment, and admire your creation. A 3-way mirror is ideal, especially for fitting.
 10. Ample waste facilities under the machine area and near the cutting table will keep your area nice and neat.
 11. Choose a soft color and bright accents for a cheerful atmosphere. Strive for easy clean ability.

Combine your desires with the suggestions above to design your very own sewing environment. Even if it's just a corner of a room, your creativity can make it a warm haven for producing dozens of fashionable one-of-a-kind masterpieces. Don't limit your shopping to the sewing notions counters, but browse in every department to complete your dream of a sewing sanctuary. After all, anything to which you devote so much of yourself certainly deserves to have special consideration.

To demonstrate just how easy it is to have your own space, I've converted my breakfast area into my sewing space. This area has lots of natural light and plenty of electrical outlets for my sewing equipment. The setup has room for **Layout and cutting fabric, stitching, pressing seams and storage.** The table measures 36x72 (3'x 6'), so it's the ideal length for a cutting table, accessible from all 4 sides when pulled out a bit, and chairs moved to another room. To protect the table, I've placed a folding cutting board for my layout and cutting. The office chair rolls easily between the sewing machine and serger, then over to the pressing area.

Take a look at the pictures attached below as examples of how you can take your existing space and turn it into your own sewing workplace. Have fun, I did.











