Get Organized

Is an unruly workspace causing you distraction and distress? Take heart; we’ve got the tips and tricks to get you organized.

Our embroidery spaces range from a table corner—where everything must be put away when embroidery time is over—to a closet, desk or a whole room. No matter what size space we have, the biggest challenge is to keep it neatly organized for efficient use.

Work area

Getting settled into a comfortable place to sit and embroider is the first step. Consider these tips:

♦ Allow a minimum of 24” under each machine for legroom. The bed of the machine should be approximately 30” from the floor, which includes the 2” to 6” machine bed. Allow a minimum of 36” side-to-side to allow adequate workspace for the embroidery machine. Consider an add-on worktable to allow more space when using the embroidery unit, but remember it will take additional space. Choose a comfortable task or office chair with adjustable height and firm backrest (for lower back support). Check for good quality rolling casters to allow movement. Chair arms can get in the way and catch on clothing, so select one without arms.

Note: Some people prefer to machine embroider standing up. Place the machine on a counter top or island if available.

♦ In addition to the machine chair, consider adding a comfortable seat to relax in, select designs, do hand work or watch a video or TV show if there is space available.

♦ For worktable depth check how far you can reach without stretching.

♦ Furniture units specially designed for the sewer and embroiderer are available in various shapes and sizes to meet specific needs. Some come with sewing machine lift units to hide the machine when not in use. Also consider some clever alternatives:

♦ Add kitchen, bathroom or custom cabinets instead of large furniture for work and storage space. Add a countertop for workspace.

♦ If you can’t afford to build in a countertop, consider a collapsible heavy-duty cardboard cutting table such as a Sew-Fit table. They’re lightweight and dual purpose.

♦ Another workspace alternative is a large rectangular kitchen table with leaves.

♦ Find a spot for bookshelves—either freestanding or hanging. Fill them with books, notebooks, software, designs, boxes and organizing containers.

♦ Rolling drawer units, bookcases or filing cabinets can be placed under workspaces, embroidery machine surfaces or aligned along a wall.

Walls, lighting & floors

Select washable paints for the walls and add sewing motif stencils, murals, graphics or wallpaper for interest if an entire room is your play area. Remember to select light colors for more light reflection. Use white or light colors for the floor, walls and ceiling to get the most benefit from light. Add bulletin boards to hold ideas for future projects and must-have notions.

When selecting lighting, plan for the brightest, true-color bulb possible. Remember to use a fix-
Create a dream workspace in an unused area of the home like a basement.

♦ Add countertops, kitchen cabinets and lots of lighting, including recessed can lights, pendent lights, under-cabinet lights and freestanding lamps.
♦ An island can double as a cutting table and sewing area.
♦ Cabinets hold sprays, books and software, keeping them safely away from children and pets.
♦ Use baskets and containers to organize supplies by category, plus to keep in easy reach.
♦ Divide magazines in racks by year and keep them out for reference and inspiration.
ture that gives cool temperatures as opposed to one that generates heat. Opt for as much direct-to-the-embroidery unit lighting as possible. This may be a separate lamp, an under-the-counter light or a floor fixture.

**TIP**
Aiming a light fixture toward a light colored ceiling greatly increases the light distribution in the room.

Anti-fatigue factor is important for the floor. Tile is hard on the feet; consider adding a rug. Hardwood and vinyl floors are easy to clean up but may be scratched and damaged by chair casters or dropping sharp objects and pins; protect these areas with anti-fatigue or vinyl mats. Carpeting is comfortable, but select low, dense pile to avoid snagging from pins. A clean long handled, stiff brush can be used to remove threads and scraps from a carpeted floor so they don’t become tangled in the vacuum brushes.

Finally, be sure to include enough electrical outlets for the number of machines in use. Consider waist-high outlets to alleviate extra bending. Also, consider placing the embroidery unit and computer each on a separate outlet.

**TIP**
Always use a surge protector for your equipment.

**Storing supplies**
The more supplies accumulated, the more need for organized storage. Here are some suggestions:

- Use containers of similar size that stack easily.
- Use removable labels for each container; changing them as contents change.
- Add shelves inside a closet or purchase an armoire to provide storage. In turn, the shelves can be filled with plastic tubs of like sizes.

Determine what the space will be used for and select what will fit in the width and depth. In addition, decide whether boxes will be stacked or left one row to a shelf. Both factors influence how many shelves to install. Stacking some of the containers can afford more space.

- Shelves can also be added. Place above doors or window frames then use as decorative storage or fill with plastic tubs for seldom used items or extra supplies. Below the window, drawer units can be installed. The top of the units can provide a shelf in front of the window to store books or decorations.

Place shelves along walls and place tubs, decorative boxes or baskets for frequently used supplies. Doors or a curtain can be added for a more finished look. Consider purchased bookcase units as an alternative.

- Shoe cubby organizers work great for baskets, boxes or jars of supplies.

- To further divide storage spaces for miscellaneous notions, consider drawer dividers, ice cube trays, cutlery trays, egg cartons, etc. Clear plastic boxes and chests designed for model cars, fishing tackle boxes, hardware and craft/sewing supplies are also helpful.

**TIP**
Store thread away from heat or air conditioning vents so they don’t dry out.

Thread can be stored many ways. Some embroiders separate thread by brand or by thread weight. Others store by color, mixing brands, types and sizes and just pull from color families as desired. Some like to sort by type of thread—rayon, polyester, metallic. Any of these works equally well; the preference is personal.

**embroidery machine storage**

An embroidery machine should be used and stored away from direct sunlight and heat. Wheeled, padded cases are available for moving the entire embroidery machine to classes, clubs or just to store when space is very limited and the machine must be put out of site when not in use.

The embroidery unit is something that also needs extra special care. When not in use, find a shelf, the original packing or a specially designed storage unit to keep it safe. It’s also important to pack it properly when traveling. Special cases are available for some brands of embroidery units. Check with your local dealer for information.
Here are several ideas for thread storage.

◊ Use specially designed pegged racks that are wall-mounted or counter top versions. Some are decorative, others strictly functional.
◊ A wall or framed section of pegboard with plastic or metal hooks serves the same purpose. A newer version of pegboard and slat boards are available at office supply stores.
◊ A layer of clear vinyl can keep the thread stored on racks and pegboard dust free and highly visible. To keep sunlight from causing deterioration, use a smoke colored vinyl or decorative fabric.
◊ Miniature car boxes, shoe boxes, small drawer units, antique spool chests and printer’s drawers or retail thread or floss display units with roll out racks work well. Label each box with colors or a range of numbers inside.
◊ A map or blueprint cabinet with narrow drawers is another piece perfect for thread storage.
◊ Rolling drawer racks with narrower drawers are handy to place under the sewing area, using individual drawers to sort thread by type, color or brand.

**Tip**

Place a wastebasket under the machine for trimming threads.
To save them for making custom fabrics, tape a plastic bag near the machine, or keep a small basket or tray nearby.

◊ Bobbins for the embroidery machine should be stored just as carefully as thread. Use a specially designed bobbin box such as a flexible plastic ring, plastic box, clip, magnetic bobbin holder, ice cube trays, plastic toothbrush holders, medical bottle, embroidery floss or desk-drawer organizer.
    The cones and spools of bobbin thread should be stored in a separate labeled unit from the embroidery thread to avoid confusion.
◊ Stabilizers seem to pose the most challenge when it comes to organizing. They should be kept wrinkle free, especially fusible types. Normally, they are purchased on a roll. Storage suggestions include a wine rack, baskets, skirt or pant hangers, planters or garden pots, under-shelf baskets, hanging purse, sweater or hat bags, stacked suitcases, antique trunks, individual drawers, shoe storage bags or over-the-door shoe organizer.
    Select wicker, metal or plastic baskets, plastic containers for wrapping paper or small garbage cans. Corrugated boxes with divided storage and file boxes are other options.

**Tip**

Mount several paper towel roll holders on the wall for the most commonly used stabilizers and for easy retrieval.

◊ Secure the ends of the stabilizer with loose rubber bands, ribbons or hair tape. It is important to label the type—cut-away, tear-away, adhesive, etc. Tuck the product label inside the roll of stabilizer.
    Always place water-soluble stabilizers in zipped plastic bags, away from humidity, heat and sun.
◊ Spray cans can be neatly arranged on a shelf away from a heat source or the sun, in a picnic basket, milk crate or fruit box. A spray station made from a box can be set up in a separate area.
    It can be decoratively covered when not in use.
◊ Organize needles by type and clearly label them.
    Specially designed containers are available that identify the needle currently being used. Or store needles in one of the organizers found in automotive or craft sections with many small drawers, an antique sewing machine drawer or a small basket with labeled junior baby food jars or larger pillboxes. Include one container with a slit cut in the lid to hold used and broken needles. (Tape and discard when full.)
◊ Scissors and rotary cutters can be neatly organized and quickly identified.
    ◊ Store on the work/cutting surface in a decorative basket or sewing machine drawer.
    ◊ For a collection of several types, a small three to four drawer unit can sit on top of the surface, neatly labeled and lined with flannel or felt to help eliminate movement and damage.
    ◊ Use eyeglass cases or scissor blocks to store.
    ◊ Hang scissors, tweezers, screwdrivers, etc., from a magnet strip, folding mug rack or round kitchen tool organizer placed on a lazy Susan.
    ◊ Arrange them on a magnetic tray (found in the auto section).
◊ Rulers can be placed in a specially designed quilting ruler rack or file and hung on the wall, on a cabinet hook or placed on the work surface.
Cabinetry is now available with large pull out drawers perfect for storing hoops, hoop helpers, cutting mats and many essential oversized items. In addition, divided corrugated storage boxes will keep CD-ROMs dust free and at your fingertips.

♦ Miscellaneous supplies can be stored in a canvas tool holder made for a five-gallon bucket. Place embroidery supplies in the pockets and stabilizer and hoops in the bucket.

♦ Hooks on the wall, over-the-door hangers or multi-pocketed storage can be used to hold stabilizer, notions or display samples.

♦ Store embroidery hoops in one of the larger drawer units or hang over-sized hoops from a decorative hook, on the pegboard behind your machine or from a decorative—and functional pot/pan hanger.

♦ Place permanent colored markers and marking pens in a toothbrush holder, glass or mug and keep them close at hand.

♦ Embroidery designs can be stored on the hard-drive, on floppy disks, CDs or zip disks. Organize the cards, disks and CDs in large disk organizer boxes, a CD tower or in decorative machine drawers.

Organize designs in the computer in sub-divided categories. Note: For more information on organizing designs, see “Cataloging Software” in the Winter ’02 issue of CME.

Information storage

Organize learning materials so they are available when needed.

♦ Magazines stored by title, can be kept in binders, boxes, garden planter boxes or plastic magazine holders. Place an index in a clear page protector and tape

Continued on page 18.
to the front of the holder. If your indexes aren't available, photocopy the index from each issue, placing them in a notebook for easy reference. Label the box or binder with the dates included.

♦ Books should be organized alphabetically by topic, title or author. Keeping a list on the computer takes a little time to organize, but then books can be quickly searched. Keep a computer index of titles or a simple index card file. A collection of only a few books can be stored alphabetically by title or author.

♦ Instructional materials such as store handouts, class notes, magazine articles and informational printouts from the Internet can be filed in a notebook, file box, rolling cabinet or file cabinet by topic in a neatly labeled folder. Keep another set of folders for project inspiration clips.

♦ Save software packaging information in a notebook in clear plastic page protectors with the date installed, Web sites and serial numbers. Store the CDs in a plastic storage case, in a CD rack or drawer. These can be numbered to correspond to the packaging in the notebook.

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Marathon Thread, www.marathonthread.com, (800) 989-thread. Item available: Mini Cone Travel Case


Quilter's Rule, (800) 343-9671; www.quiltersrule.com. Items available: Sew-Fit Corrugated Cutting Table and mat.


Robertson-Anton Textile Co., (800) 932-2626 or your favorite sewing machine dealer. Item available: Robertson-Anton Cadet (thread box and carrying case, empty with or without thread).


SCS, USA, 9631 N.E. Cofton Street, Portland, OR 97220. To find a local dealer call (800) 547-8025. Items available: Maderia Embroidery Thread Treasure Chest and Koala Cabinets.


Sterilite Corp., available at most discount retailers. Items available: rolling drawer carts, drawer organizer trays, small counter top drawers, clear boxes and portable containers with handles.

Sullivans USA Inc., available at Hancock Fabrics or www.karoshcabinet.com. Items available: Home Hobby Table; Portable Sewing Table.

Syvilia Design Sewing Furniture, (800) 428-2804 or (780) 468-6450; www.syviliadesign.com. Items available: full range of cabinets with airlift and tables.

Verilux, available at www.healthylight.com or verilux.net (800) 211-7775. Items available: Happy Eyes clamp lamp, floor and desk lamp and HappyEyes magnifiers floor lamp.