# Home

# ORGANIZING YOUR GARAGE

**If boxes, bicycles, yard tools** and sports gear have taken over space once occupied by your car, it's time to reclaim your garage and organize it for optimum usage.

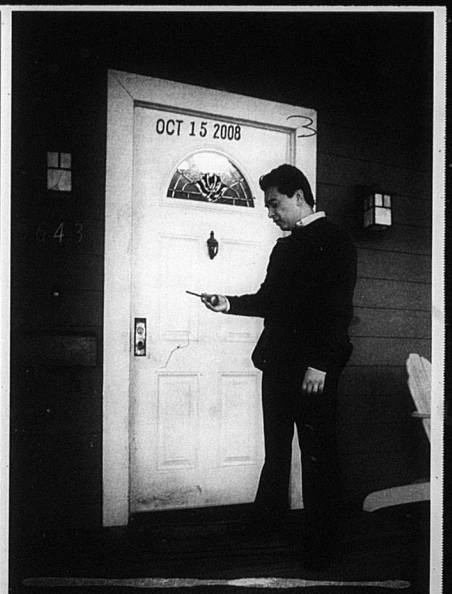
Organizing this important part of your home may seem like drudgery, but it will save you time and frustration in the long run. Do yourself a favor and clear it out soon on a sunny day. Hefty trash bags and empty boxes on hand for items you don't want that can be sold immediately at a community yard sale or donated to a local charity's second-hand store. After you've cleared out the space, use these strategies to get organized and make the most of your garage:

- Create "departments" and store like items together. Your departments might include car care, lawn care, household maintenance, recycling, seasonal storage, sporting equipment and tools.
- Attach utility shelves to one wall for storing things like gardening supplies, insecticides, paint and auto-maintenance supplies. Put poisonous products on a high shelf, out of reach of children and pets, and make sure solvents and paints are in sealed and labeled metal containers away from heat sources such as a furnace or water heater.
- Add prime storage space by mounting inexpensive kitchen cabinets on a wall.
- Put pegboard on a wall for hanging tools. "Brand" your tools by painting your initials on them in a bright color. This way, when neighbors borrow a tool, your brand will remind them to return it.
- Keep a coiled garden hose or long extension cord in a 5-gallon bucket for easy storing and toting when you're ready to use it.
- Use clear, labeled storage containers so you can tell at a glance what's inside. For example, empty jelly or baby food jars can hold different kinds of screws, nails and washers.
- Use silverware organizers to hold items like twine, scissors and box cutters.
- Store paintbrushes in empty coffee cans, brush end up, or hang them from a pegboard.
- Clip loose sheets of sandpaper to a clipboard hung from a wall hook.
- Keep single-edged razor blades in a block of Styrofoam—up high and out of kids' reach.
- Maximize overhead space by hanging seldom-ridden bikes from rubber-coated utility hooks.
- If you have rafters, put boards across them to make a mini-storage loft over part of the garage for seasonal items such as holiday decorations, snow shovels or lawn furniture.
- String a hammock from the ceiling for an inexpensive way to store lightweight but bulky pool toys.
- Stow off-season sports gear, such as helmets, kneepads and gloves, in clearly labeled plastic bins.
- Use large plastic trash cans with lids to store potting soils, compost materials and fertilizers. Keep them sealed, away from toys, equipment and water. Don't store fertilizer and gasoline near each other as they can ignite.
- Paint parking spaces on your garage floor for tricycles, skateboards, wagons and scooters. Let your kids take turns being Garage Police and collecting fines when equipment is not parked correctly.
- Designate a special "fix-it" shelf or area for broken tools and other items that need to be fixed.

When the work is done, take a photo of the finished product. Keep the photo as motivation in case clutter starts to creep back in a few months later. Celebrate by pulling your vehicles into the newly reclaimed space, and give yourself a pat on the back because now you know what's in your garage and where to find things when you need them. ★

*Story by Kathy Pel-of Dallas.*



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