

Plan lighting, storage and accessories thoroughly for an efficient design

By Allison E. Beatty
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It's difficult to be handy around the house when your supplies aren't handy. That's where a workshop comes in. Whether you're remodeling or buying new, it's easy to add a do-it-yourself workshop to help you work more efficiently.

Put careful thought and effort into designing a workshop based on its function and how much space that requires. If you're a weekend carpenter who wants to make bookshelves, molding and cabinets, you'll want plenty of room to store and cut lumber and set up saws.

"The key is to organize the space and have the constraint to put things back where they belong when you're done," said Bill Styczynski, president of Styczynski Walker & Associates Architects in Downers Grove. "If everything has its spot, it's so much easier."

You'll also have to plan how you'll move supplies through the space. Drywall is large and cumbersome to move, particularly in a narrow space. Lumber also can be tricky to carry around turns in a staircase.

Styczynski once added a staircase from the garage to the basement for a homeowner who planned to work with long pieces of lumber. "This allowed for a straight run for bringing in 12- or 16-foot pieces of wood," he said.

If your workshop will be used for painting projects, focus on the supplies and how they are stored. Whether you are painting walls around the house or doing artistic projects in the workshop, consider adding a utility sink to help with cleaning.

Lighting is an important element of any workshop, so it helps to talk with a licensed electrician about adding good overhead and task lighting. Extra outlets or one with a dedicated circuit may be necessary if you plan to use many tools or one that is high-powered.

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It's essential to have proper ventilation when working with adhesives,

paint and dust. For instance, you may have to crack open a window when varnishing. On the other hand, too much moisture in the air can cause lumber to warp and swell. Air cleaners are useful for continuously filtering the air and removing small particles. Shop vacs and dust collection systems are also effective in controlling dust.

For cutting wood, set up a table or countertop for using a specialty saw.

When planning simpler projects, such as hanging pictures and repairing drywall cracks, focus on portable tools that are easier to use. A small saw, a screwdriver, a cordless drill and a toolbox for storing nails, screws and miscellaneous supplies should do the trick, said Brian Kagen, a vice president of product marketing with Black & Decker.

As you plan for tools, consider the safety aspect, particularly if there are children in the house. "It's good to have an area where you can keep power tools isolated from the kids so you don't have someone trying to turn on a table saw," Styczynski said.

Whether you have an enclosed room or a freestanding workshop along a wall, the location should make sense from a traffic-flow standpoint. If your workshop is in the basement and you want to minimize noise from power tools, look for a spot away from the staircase or TV area, said Jeff Benach, co-principal of Lexington Homes.

If you live on a narrow city lot and are planning to do large



Take steps to control sawdust and debris in your DIY workshop when working with lumber and other materials. EUREKA PHOTO



Workshops can be set up just about anywhere — in the basement, the garage, even in a shed. TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO



Consider the total number of electrical outlets you'll need to handle power tools. BLACK & DECKER PHOTO

woodworking projects, you may have to think creatively.

"If part of the lower level has to be used as a garage, you'll be restricted to whatever space is left," Benach said.

That smaller space could be used more for storage than doing major woodworking projects. In that scenario, the type of storage is key to making the space useful. One option is to combine wall shelving for storing painting supplies with a pegboard and a portable toolbox for storing basic

tools. There are many construction grade bins and hooks designed for storing tools.

Once you get all the logistics in order, it's time to start those projects. Whether your passion is woodworking, painting or just fixing odds and ends, you'll quickly realize that organizing the workshop is the easy part. Now comes the real work.