



BUY IT!

The INSPIRA STUDIO Thread Cabinet puts up to 300 spools at your fingertips with tilting, adjustable thread pins on five pullout racks. myinspirastudio.com

BUY IT!

The Mat & Hoop Cabinet stacks with four other modular INSPIRA STUDIO storage units to create the look and function of custom crafts room built-ins. myinspirastudio.com



Kathy Jenkins is a Certified Professional Organizer, Certified Family Manager Coach, and founder of Come To Order.

create without clutter

Ready, set, make it your own! A crafts or hobby space that melds inspiration and organization will energize you to do your best work.

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Whether you're passionate about sewing, scrapbooking, or sculpting, creativity is often messy. The fabric bundles, paper piles, and assorted bric-a-brac aren't everyday clutter—they're potential works of art. At least that's what you've been telling yourself and your family for years.

In order to keep your supplies, tools, and in-progress projects from taking over your home, set boundaries and decide how much space you're willing to give to a craft or hobby. "Don't let your supplies drive your decision," professional organizer Kathy Jenkins says. "Your space must come first." Although this initial decision can be tough, shared spaces (a dining area that moonlights as a sewing room) or portable solutions (wheeled caddies, project bags) can let you flex some creative muscles even if your home doesn't accommodate a dedicated room.

GET IT TOGETHER

After defining your creative space, gather your tools, materials, and references together. If you stash creative gear in multiple spots, you likely don't know your true storage needs. Sort like items into piles, but don't place them in cabinets, closets, or containers yet. "Successfully storing and organizing crafts supplies is about ongoing inventory control," Jenkins says. Start the editing process by combining partial quantities and eliminating duplicates. Test all tools and supplies, discarding anything that doesn't work perfectly.

Determining whether an item—or indeed, an entire craft—is out-of-date can be particularly challenging. Jenkins reminds clients that "Crafts change over time, and so do you." Maybe you were into metallic printed fabric, but you finished those projects years ago. Do you really want to dedicate space to a look that's over for you?

Because people often struggle to make objective decisions about things they're passionate about, a paid professional or a trusted friend can push you to get realistic. "You can easily convince yourself you *might* need something someday," Jenkins says. Family and other crafters, however, aren't always the best helpers. Family comments can easily feel judgmental, and friends, particularly those who share your hobby, are likely to add your castoffs to their own already overflowing supplies.

Reference materials are one area where Jenkins recommends ruthlessness. Patterns, instructions, and other inspiration from the 1970s, '80s, and even the '90s are often dated to the point of being unusable. Even if you like vintage looks, you're unlikely to actually work from vintage directions. "Bottom line: Vintage reference materials must be timeless to merit storing," Jenkins says. Ask yourself if you can get similar (and perhaps better) information and inspiration somewhere else that requires no storage space, such as a website, a library, or a museum.

GIVE IT AWAY

Your old supplies can benefit someone else when you give them away. "Remind yourself that you're passing on your passion," Jenkins says. "You're encouraging someone else's expression and discovery." It's also pretty cool that your supplies can become something totally different from what you imagined in another person's hands.

Elementary schools will take just about any art supply you're willing to part with, and middle and high school students are in constant need of supplies as well. Don't overlook community resource centers, including those that cater to after-school care

and individuals with special needs. Preschools and day care centers are generally a bit more selective about donations, but adult day cares and nursing homes are often very open, even accepting old magazines and books. Always call first and explain specifically what you want to give them.

PUT IT AWAY

Most creative people are also visual learners, so play to your strengths while setting up your organized crafts or hobby space. "You will feel more creative and energized when your supplies are displayed," Jenkins says. "If you put it away in a cabinet or drawer, you might as well not have it."

Take the time to display your supplies and tools attractively, keeping like with like. Hang items on walls using hooks and other holders. Store clustered supplies in clear containers, and position everything on open shelving. Reserve tabletops, cubbies, and shelves for items you frequently use and interact with, such as markers, fabric, and paper.

You can safely put away things that you will be purposeful in finding. When you need a cutting mat, for instance, you will remember that you have one and know where to find it. By contrast, you probably won't remember all the acrylic paint colors you have. Jenkins recommends displaying your major or most frequently used colors, and then creating a list or sample palette of all the colors you currently have in stock.

KEEP IT TIDY

Quick cleanup is critical if you want to keep creative clutter to a minimum. "You will not put things back into deep storage mid-project," Jenkins says. "So do everything you can to limit packing and unpacking."

Designate clear containers for each active project. Look for containers with handles (and perhaps wheels) so you can move them around easily. Plastic zipper bags or cardboard pizza boxes are inexpensive alternatives to off-the-rack options, but if a project is taking years to complete or you're working with sensitive materials, invest in acid-free containers. Whatever your container choice, write the project name, start date, and target deadline with marker on a label or the container itself. That way, you create a project log and a written goal in a few seconds.

RESOURCES BEGIN ON PAGE 117.

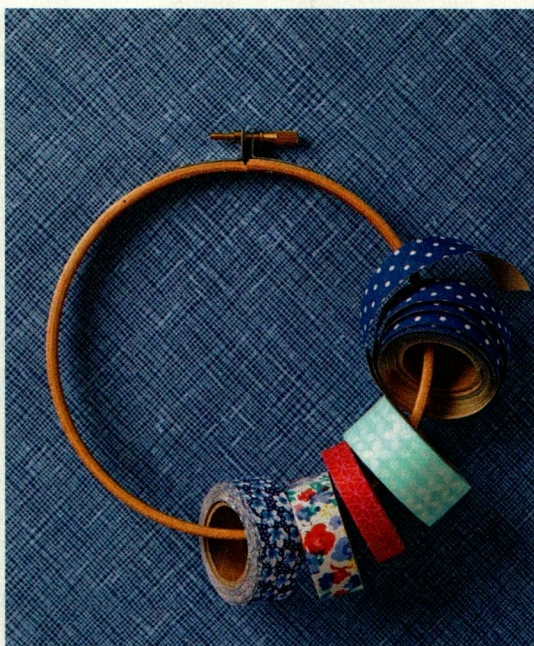
Spools need to spin freely to release their contents. Use spindles or individual compartments to keep twine, string, and thread tangle-free. Heavier materials like yarn and cord can be rolled or bundled, particularly if you're dispensing more slowly.



TOP: Divide an office supply tray with segments of plastic canvas cut to size and notched with scissors. Pair spools and bobbins in each compartment. **ABOVE:** Stand twine and string upright in a plastic basket and dispense by pulling out ends.

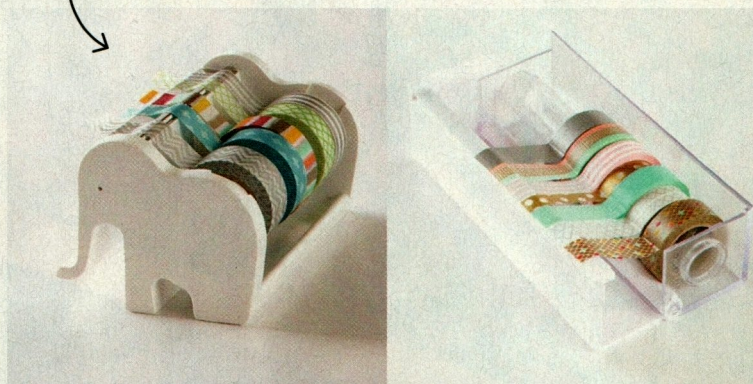
TAPE

You can easily overbuy decorative tapes if you store them in a closed box or canister. Know what you have in your personal stash—and put it to use—by displaying your entire collection in a repurposed or purchased dispenser.



BUY IT!

Super-cute dispensers delight while decluttering. Each holds up to 8 rolls. Elephant Multiroll Tape Dispenser, \$27; cutetape.com. Scotch Expressions Multiroll Tape Dispenser, \$11; scotchbrand.com



TOP: Thread up to a dozen rolls of washi tape on a wood embroidery hoop and dangle from a wall hook. **ABOVE:** Insert dowels through holes in a metal basket to serve as spindles for tapes. Secure the entire system with rubber bands.

ABOVE: Cover a cardboard aluminum foil container with adhesive paper and fill with tape rolls. The serrated edge is ideal for tearing off segments.

Keep only papers that are wrinkle-free, squared-off, and larger than 8 inches square. As you shop for organizers, remember that almost all scrapbook papers are 12×12 inches; rolled papers are typically 21, 24, or 30 inches tall.

BELOW: Sort scrapbook papers by type, color, pattern, and any other criteria meaningful to you, then place in a clear plastic 2.5-gallon bag. Organize bags by clipping them together with wooden trouser hangers and hanging from a closet rod.



Instead of trying to make paper organizers from an office supply store work, invest in a proper-size solution that's specifically designed for your crafts projects. Double Latched Portable Project Case, \$9 each; shopiriusa.com.

BUY
IT!



PAINT

Keep only fresh paints. A year-old quarter tube of paint is probably drier than ideal, and separated paints are difficult to fully remix; dispose of old paints properly. Paints stored at a consistent room temperature stay mixed and usable longer.



TOP: Sort paints by type and color family in a clear vinyl shoe organizer. **ABOVE:** Construct mini display shelves for 2-ounce acrylic paint tubes by combining a 1/2-inch-thick molding strip and a thin metal towel rod.

FABRIC

Get tough about keeping remnants! Yes, they can be used again—but probably not by you. You need to see fabric in order to use it, so don't pile fabric in filing cabinets or drawers. Fabrics need to breathe, so opt for wire shelves whenever possible.



TOP: Sort and display fabrics in clear acrylic wall pockets. Position favorite remnants so you can see all your options. **ABOVE:** Drape fabrics for a single project over a five-arm trouser hanger. Store the hanger in a closet or hang on the wall.