

Setting Up a Sewing Room

2.101

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SEW-lutions Guidelines

Your Guide
to
Successful
Sewing

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Whether you reclaim a room after children have moved out, only have a corner of the family room, or you're custom designing your dream studio, there are some things that all sewers need to make their work go smoothly.



Photo courtesy of Closetmaid

A perfect tabletop is a hollow core door from the hardware store, or a padded sheet of plywood. Take advantage of the space underneath by placing it on a chest of drawers or a sturdy shelf pair.

Electricity

You need power in several areas of your sewing room—for machines, iron, task lighting and computers. Dedicated circuits are ideal, and a surge protector is essential to avoid damaging equipment.

Try to avoid stretching extension cords across traffic areas to avoid accidents. Wall mounted power strips allow you to plug in multiple things in a single area. Consult an electrician to add outlets if needed, and explain what will be plugged into them.

Lighting

Good lighting is important to sewing success. Not only do you need general room lighting, but task lighting as well. Tabletop lights work well to illuminate individual work areas for sewing machines, sergers and computers. Daylight bulbs allow for true-color viewing.

Cutting Table

Depending on the room size and orientation, try to find space for a dedicated cutting area. If you're a garment sewer, it should be large enough to allow for a folded 60" fabric width; if you're a quilter, a 45" fabric width is sufficient; length depends on the available space.

The height of the cutting surface is key to comfort. It should be 3-4" below your elbow height for using scissors, and 6-8" below for using a rotary cutter. If you use both, pick a midpoint.

Flooring

Sewers often disagree about the best flooring options. Some prefer hard-surface flooring like wood, tile or vinyl; others prefer soft-surface flooring like carpeting and rugs. The choice depends on your sewing and cleaning style—pins are easier to find on hard-surface flooring, but carpeting provides warmth if you sew in your bare feet!

If you plan to do other related crafts in the same room, consider floor cleaning options. Dyes, paints, glues, etc. are harder to remove from carpeting than most hard-surface floorings.

Storage

The biggest concern most sewers have is storage—not only for the burgeoning fabric stash, but for the cadre of notions and tools. It's good to be able to find the things you need.

There is no one perfect storage system for sewers—some people prefer plastic tubs for everything, others like to see what they have and don't want it behind any cabinet doors or in boxes. It's important to keep your sewing things clean and neat, as well as away from sunlight which can damage and fade fabrics.

If you choose covered storage like tubs and bins, be sure to label them clearly so you know what's inside. The "out of sight, out of mind" saying can cause you to duplicate purchases simply because you can't find something.

Some sewers like to store their tools in sectioned containers, many of which can be toted to class as well as used in the sewing room.

Consider wire bins to store fabrics—they come in a variety of widths and depths and fit into racks that allow them to slide out like drawers. Remember though that they don't protect contents from dust and light.

If you need every bit of storage you can get, look for over-the-door pocket storage, hooks, wall units, stackable bins, etc., but be sure to leave yourself room to move around. A wall-mounted magnetic rail (from a kitchen store) is a great place to store your scissors.



All sewers collect books and/or magazines, so consider adding a bookcase or wall-mounted book shelves to keep your library handy. If there's simply not room, store it nearby for handy reference.

Pressing Station

It's convenient to have your iron near your sewing area so you can press as you go. Whether you choose a full-size ironing board, a small tabletop board or a padded pressing surface depends on the available space in the room. If you choose an ironing board, select one with adjustable height so you can select the one most comfortable for you.

Hanging Space

If your room has a closet, use it to store in-progress sewing projects, like things that need to be hemmed, fit, etc. Some people prefer to hang their fabric stash, as opposed to folding it. If you can't spare a dedicated closet, add an over-the-door hanger, or a clothes rack.

Mirror

If you're sewing garments, be sure to have a full-length mirror somewhere in the house to check fit, length, etc. of your creations. The inside of a closet door is an ideal location for a mirror.

Computer Station

If you're downloading embroidery designs directly to your machine, you'll need space to have a computer (laptop or desktop) near your sewing station, and power

for the computer. Even if you don't download designs, your machine may utilize online updates, or you can use your computer to find free patterns, online technique resources, etc. The Sewing & Craft Alliance website has free projects and over a hundred SEW-lutions Guidelines instructional sheets.

Sewing Station

Perhaps the most used area of your sewing room is the space with your sewing machine(s) and serger. It's important to have a comfortable chair that's the correct height for your body and sewing surface height. Your chair should allow you to sit at the machine in a straight and upright position, with knees bent at a 90° angle and elbows the same. Your forearms should be parallel to the floor. The ideal height of your machine bed is the distance from your elbow to the floor.

If you prefer a sewing machine surface that's tilted, purchase a special mat or stand for this purpose. It supports the machine base at a 10-15° angle to reduce stress on arms and neck.

Don't skimp on your sewing chair purchase. Select one with an adjustable height, adjustable back support, arms and a seat with good support for your body and legs. Wheels on the chair allow for easy movement around the room, and from machine to computer to iron, depending on the configuration.

Refuse

Don't forget that you need at least one trash receptacle in the room, and a recycling container. Most sewers like to have a small trash bin near the machine, whether it's a small weighted bin that sits next to the machine, or a full-on floor container for tossing threads and clippings.

Display Space

If you collect sewing memorabilia, like thimbles, antique sewing tools, figurines, etc., you may need space to display your collection, so don't forget that as you plan your space. You should enjoy being in your sewing room and the arrangement should work for you—that's key to sewing happiness. There are many ways to attain the same pleasure, depending on the room you have and how you use it. ■

