

Treat Your Garage to a Makeover

Americans love their garages. Not only are they getting bigger, they're becoming multi-functional, much more than just a place to park the car. That's why it's important to include the garage in your list of summer projects, whether it's just cleaning it up, making better use of storage space, or stealing a portion of it for some other use entirely.

And if you're getting ready to sell, a nice orderly garage will be a plus to potential buyers.

"One thing you don't want to do is fill up the garage," says Robert Irwin in his book *Improve the Value of Your Home Up to \$100,000: 50 Surefire Techniques and Strategies* (John Wiley & Sons, 2003). "Buyers like to see plenty of open space in the garage. It tells them your house has adequate storage area as well as room to park car(s)."

If you're staying put, then stealing a nook or corner of the garage for a workshop, extra storage, workout space or recreation area for your older children can put some of that extra space to use. Or, at a minimum, getting rid of the clutter and clearing the cobwebs and cleaning the floors will look great to buyers - or will be one less thing on your summer list if you're not selling.

By following a few tips and keeping these considerations in mind, you'll be well on your way to a more functional garage:

- Get rid of all that extra stuff. What's in all of those boxes lining the shelves of your garage? Gather all your excess items (this would be a good time to gather items from the rest of your house as well) and have a garage sale. Once it's over, take everything that's left over to a local charity.
- Dust the walls and corners. Get rid of spider webs.
- Do you have a project in mind that needs a building permit? Check with your local building department to make sure your project is within code guidelines.
- Do you need help? If your project involves electrical or plumbing additions, you may want to hire a contractor. Or, if you feel comfortable with the scope of the project, you may want to tackle it yourself.
- If you're aiming for more space, visit your local home improvement store to purchase cabinets, wood for shelves or other ready-made storage systems. You may also want to hang up heavy-duty hooks for larger items that can be stored securely on a garage wall.
- Try to get everything off the floor and into cabinets or shelves.
- Make sure all flammable items are stored away and out of reach of children.
- Also, all tools and chemicals should be out of children's reach.
- If you don't already have one, install a smoke detector in your garage.
- If you'll be spending a considerable amount of time in the garage, you may want to invest in adding a window,

fan, or space heater.

If it's additional space you're after, home improvement retail giant [Lowe's](#) offers [how-to tips](#) on building a loft 80 inches off the floor, allowing plenty of head room to walk and park a minivan. Lowe's says two people can get the loft done in a weekend.

Once your project is complete or your garage is cleaned and organized, it will be time to clean those oily floors. Start by wiping any excess oil with a towel or cloth. Pour some paint thinner on the oil spot, making sure it is fully saturated, then pour an absorbent material over the saturated spot. You can use cat litter, sand, baking soda, corn meal, sawdust, or any other absorbent material you may have on hand.

Leave the mixture to set overnight then sweep it up the next day. If possible, try to use a heavy push broom with sturdy bristles. Finish it up by pouring a little laundry bleach, dry dishwasher detergent or a concrete cleaning solution on the oil-marked concrete. Let it sit for about an hour. Rinse the area off with hot water and scrub the area with a broom.

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