

CREATIVE
HOMEOWNER

ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

Basements Attics & Garages

PLAN · DESIGN · REMODEL

STEP-BY-STEP PROJECTS
FOR ADDING SPACE
WITHOUT ADDING ON





CHAPTER **7**

Creating the Ultimate Garage

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Rediscovering the Garage

For years, most homeowners have used their garages for parking cars and storing stuff that doesn't fit anywhere else or is overflow from other parts of the house. Or they have taken that valuable floor space and turned it into another master suite or family room.

Rather than using your garage as a scaled-down storage unit or new living space that looks like the rest of the house, consider converting it into a high-end recreational space that is improved but at the same time more garage-like. If you like working on cars, why not create a state-of-the-art car-restoration studio? Maybe you'd prefer a furniture-making shop that will be the envy of every craftsman in town, or a big home gym.

Part of what's driving this change is the availability of new storage products designed specifically for the garage. But simple common sense plays a bigger role. Most two-car garages occupy about 500 square feet of space, and that's space that already has a foundation under it, a floor in it, walls around it, a roof over it, and very easy access for big and heavy items through the overhead doors. In these times of high real estate costs, you can't find 500 nearly habitable square feet for less money anywhere.

MODULAR STORAGE SYSTEMS, below, that include both cabinets and wall-hung options can accommodate just about everything that most people need to store.



IT DOESN'T TAKE LONG to fill up your garage. One thing leads to another, and before you know it, the cars are out on the driveway, the door is always closed, and there's a note on the refrigerator that says CLEAN OUT THE GARAGE.



A TOTAL GARAGE MAKEOVER costs some money, especially if you choose high-end cabinets and flooring. But the results look great, create accessible storage for all the essentials, and even leave room for the cars, at least for the time being.





MODULAR CABINET SYSTEMS, like those shown above, make for very flexible storage, particularly when mounted on casters. The layout can change easily when your needs change.

MANY CEILING-MOUNTED STORAGE UNITS are available. Some have doors, like the one at right, others are open. Large specialty units can even fit above overhead garage doors.



Cabinet Systems

A good cabinet system is best defined by how it works, not by how it looks. If you have specialty items that are difficult to store, like some sporting goods, make sure that you find a cabinet that will handle the job. Probably the best—and the most expensive—way to get a good cabinet system is to have a cabinet dealer outfit your garage for you. However, you can do the same thing by figuring out what cabinet sizes you need and then buying knockdown units at a home center.

Another option is to buy one of the new modular garage storage systems. These systems have a big selection of different base and wall cabinets, often with a caster-mounting option so you can easily reposition the units when your needs change. Some of these manufacturers also offer wall-hung storage systems that complement their cabinets.

When looking at different cabinet lines, be sure to check for specialty units that hang from the ceiling. Some are just simple boxes with clever hanging hardware. But others are designed to make use of the entire space above your garage doors.

Increasing Your Mobility

Not everything in a garage is best stored permanently against a wall. Woodworking equipment and exercise machines are just two kinds of hardware that come to mind. These things need more space when they're being used and need much less when they're not. The logical solution is to mount them on casters so they're easy to move.

Sometimes the base of heavy-duty tools comes with holes for installing casters, but usually you'll have to create some way to mount them. This can take some time and often a lot of creativity. But once things are rolling you'll be happy you made the effort.

Castors come in different sizes and with different mounting hardware. Some simply swivel while others swivel and can be locked in place. Because you'll almost always need four castors for anything you want to move, it's a good idea to put a combination of two swivel and two locking castors on each item. This yields good maneuverability and locking capability, and at less cost than putting locking castors on each corner.

Flooring Options

Most garage floors are made of concrete, which is a wonderful building material. It's hard and durable, and it can carry a tremendous amount of weight without breaking. In other words, it's perfect for garage floors. When properly installed, the only problems concrete will give you are cosmetic: it stains easily, and it's uncomfortable—standing on concrete for a long time



GARAGE FLOORS, left, have requirements that differ from other floors in your home. Standard paints won't hold up, but specialty finishes can provide an attractive, durable floor.

SPECIALTY FLOOR PAINT creates a clean, attractive surface for any garage floor, above. Proper preparation is essential for the paint to bond successfully to the concrete.

hurts your feet and legs. Even when concrete is clean, though, some people find its appearance boring. In recent years, these people have been drawn to a number of different flooring treatments that make concrete look as good as it works.

Upgrading Concrete

The most common way to improve your concrete floor is to paint it. Until the last few years, this choice was often disappointing. The paint didn't bond well to the concrete and was damaged when hot tires were parked on it. But new garage floor paints, available at home centers, are designed to work much better. One good system has two parts. First you apply an epoxy paint; then you sprinkle colored paint chips over the fresh surface. When the floor dries, the chips provide extra traction to make the concrete, especially when wet, much less slippery.

Keeping Your Floor Clean

Your new floor may look great when you're done installing it, but a short trip on a muddy road or a day spent driving on salty winter highways can make it look pretty bad once you get home. If you are fortunate enough to have a floor drain, you can just wait until your cars drip dry and then hose down the floor and let the drain take the dirty water away.

On a coated or uncoated floor without a drain, a 3-foot-wide floor squeegee is a great help. Hose down the floor; then use the squeegee to push the water out through the garage door openings. The squeegee also works for grooved floor pads, but not as well on modular floor tiles. Traditional tools, a floor mop and bucket, are required for those.





CONCRETE FLOORS are durable, but they require much maintenance to keep them looking good.

The high-end garage-conversion people tend to favor floor coverings rather than coatings. One popular option is floor pads. These come in rolls, often 6 feet wide, that are installed in much the same way as sheet acrylic flooring, though no adhesive is used. The material floats on the floor, and any seams are taped together. Many colors and textures are available.

Plastic floor tiles are another high-end option. They usually come in 12-inch interlocking squares and require no adhesive or tape. You lay out, meas-

ure, and cut these tiles much as you would vinyl tiles for the bathroom or kitchen. The tiles will take longer to install than the roll pads, but the work is easier and the tiles are thicker than the pads, so you'll get more cushioning if that's important to you.

Neither the pads nor the tiles are cheap, especially if you cover the entire floor of a two-car garage. Expect to pay at least \$1,000 to do the job yourself. But then, nothing can change the look of your garage as dramatically as a bright red or yellow floor.



**BRIGHTLY
COLORED
FLOOR TILES**

laid in a clever pattern make a strong design statement. No one could confuse this floor with a boring concrete slab.