1. Love to Sew Podcast [*https://lovetosewpodcast.com/episodes/episode-130-sewing-spaces/*](https://lovetosewpodcast.com/episodes/episode-130-sewing-spaces/)*)*
2. Declutter and Organize Podcast *(*[*http://clearthedecks.co.uk/sewing-space*](http://clearthedecks.co.uk/sewing-space) *)*
3. <https://www.patchworkposse.com/organize-your-sewing-room/> Has a good list of solutions for specific items and activities.
4. ReStore of Dane County <https://www.facebook.com/restoremadison/>
5. Ikea <https://www.ikea.com/us/en/>
6. Dropbox File organization <https://www.dropbox.com/home>
7. UW SWAP, mentioned in chat <https://swap.wisc.edu/>

Welcome to MASG’s first ever virtual meeting!

My name is Rachel Patterson. I’m the current web editor for the Madison Chapter of the American Sewing Guild, and I will be your hostess this evening. While social distancing is currently keeping us apart, we still want to be a part of each other’s creative endeavors. We’re very happy that you could join us tonight!

Before we begin, we have a couple of announcements:

Announcements

**First up, a message from Lisa, our Community Sewing committee chair.** “If you need fabric for all the extra community sewing you’ve been doing, the Guild’s stash is available. There are about a dozen pieces, each around 2-4 yards. Contact Lisa for details and and set up a porch pickup.”

**Now we have a message from MASG president, Lorraine Torrence.**

The April meeting was originally planned to have two parts. First, MASG president Lorraine Torrence was going to present the “President’s Challenge.” However, we really need to be together in person to try garments on and understand the scope of the assignment. So this challenge will be delayed until we can meet together again.

Second, I had planned to talk about my sewing room. Well, wouldn’t you know? We are broadcasting live from that very location! We’re making the best of this safer-at-home situation by capitalizing on it. Not only will we talk about design and see pictures of the process, but you will get a person (virtual) tour and see those concepts in action.

In September of last year, Mary Fisher from Sort N’ Release gave a FANTASTIC talk on organization. I wholeheartedly loved that meeting! If you missed it, Mary’s lecture notes are available on her website and that’s a great place to start. I think of her talk as “Sewing Organization 101” and this is the follow-up class, “Sewing Organization 102.”

If at any time you need to take a break, pause the video and start up when you are ready. The beauty of this format is that you won’t have to miss a thing. If I talk too fast (which I tend to do!) you can jump back or if I drag on too long, you can visit this recording later and go to the parts that interest you! The entire slideshow will be on our website. I’ll have it on the MadisonASG.com homepage under “Announcements” for a while, but eventually it will live on our “Resources” page.

So, let’s begin!

**Prologue**

My craft room, and the entire basement, really, were a mess. That’s putting it lightly. We had just moved three people and two cats from a 3 bedroom house to a 1 bedroom + loft apartment, and back into a three bedroom house, but one without an official basement storage area (thank you to whoever designed the “raised ranch” style house…) We welcomed another little person to the family, which forced my husband’s office set up into the already crowded basement. Chaos.

My breaking point happened somewhere between a surprise visit from out-of-town family (where I felt deeply embarrassed to show them the Hoarders episode happening downstairs) and the need to contain my crawling baby on the disgusting, old shag carpet, infested with sewing pins. We needed a change for everyone’s health, safety, and sanity.

This was the beginning of my craft room renovation.

**Who should listen?**

If you’ve been considering making a change in your creative space, this talk is definitely for you!

If you feel like your space is working pretty well, there is still a lot to learn! You might just realize that you’ve unknowingly been “making do” with something very fixable.

**Disclaimer** – I don’t have any actual training in organization or interior design… but I am a BIG residential and universal design nerd! So file this talk in the “advice from a friend” category. I briefly worked in construction so I’m familiar with that realm, but nothing close to professional.

# So, you’ve decided to make a change…

* Phase 1 – Observe
* Phase 2 – Learn
* Phase 3 – Logistics
* Phase 4 – Action
* Phase 5 – Share

Phase 1 – Observe

*June 2016 – December 2018…* This phase can take as long as you need! It’s all about gathering ideas and imagining how they would fit.

Dreaming is often the easiest part. It begins when you start saying “I wish…”

Pintrest for ideas, visit craft rooms of friends, notice handy set-ups during classes or retreats.

# You want to change your sewing room? Great! But before you move *anything*, STOP and consider…

1. What don’t I like about my space?
   * Obviously, something led you to consider making a change. Write it down! Write down every little thing about your room that bugs you.
   * Can’t think of them off hand? Start working on a project from start to finish and keep a notepad next to you. Narrate the steps you take (out loud!) as if someone is standing next to you and they will be using your space next time to do the same task.
   * Every time you find yourself adding helpful details like “you’ll have to move X out of the way first,” or “it’s a bit of a reach” or “you’ll have to dig through this unorganized/overcrowded/haphazard area” you know those are things that need to change.
2. How did it get this way?
   * Picture from Organizing Solutions for Every Quilter of piles on table.
   * Contrast it with my Before picture.
3. What do I like and want to make better use of?
   * For me, I really liked being so close to natural light (whereas my husband’s area is on the windowless side of the room.)
4. What does my space say about how I tend to work?
   * Are you meticulously organized or do you create among the chaos?
   * Don’t fight your natural style. Go with it! Some crafters need to see all of their supplies out in front of them and others find it overstimulating or distracting. ***(*Inside the Creative Studio*)***

These questions finally gave me the guidance I was looking for. My space wasn’t working, but I had been working in it for so long, I’d become numb to the exact inefficiencies. Now I had a clear plan! Plus, my daughter would be sharing the space, so she went through the questions, too. We compared our styles and concluded that we would require different solutions within the one shared space. ***(Organizing Solutions for Ever Quilter)***

If you feel like there are certain habits you’d like to change or there are specific roadblocks in your workspace, the **Decluttering & Organizing Your Sewing Space** podcast is for you!

# Identify basic goals for the space:

* Safety
* Warmth
* Clean-look, Efficient storage
* Useful Crafting space
* Friendly feeling for visitors

# My “dream” space would also include:

* Electrical outlet for the craft table (island)
* Mirrors for fittings, similar to existing system I had on the backs of my old cabinet doors
* Access to under-stair storage
* Vented craft area: powerful fan, vented to the window. Ability to have this area completely closed/covered. Located close to an electrical outlet.
* The addition of a door for basement privacy (for guests or sewing all-nighters!)

Phase 2 - Learn

# *January 2019 – March 2019 (but learning never stops!)*

# The Beginning:

When I start a project (*any* project) I do a TON of research. I immediately start requesting books at the library. I started with books on residential interior design and home office design. There was plenty of information on basic furniture layouts and colorful books on building an attractive, motivating, and personally significant space.

Craft spaces are not standardized offices, though. We need open space to create and have more stuff to store. This led me to peruse the home storage genre and search for creative ways to utilize a given space. Unfortunately, this genre was too broad, and endless examples of organized entryways didn’t quite relate to my wide basement space with absolutely zero doors.

Finally, the phrase “workshop design” started to bring more answers. While 95% of these books are *woodworking* workshop design, the other 5% is focused on artist studios. Bingo!

# Here are my favorite studio design books…

1. **Organizing Solutions for Every Quilter: An Illustrated Guide to the Space of Your Dreams** by Carolyn Woods (2011) – NOT just for quilters… ALL sewists should read this book *FIRST!!* If you only read one book about organization, make it THIS BOOK. You will understand your space on a much deeper level and know what needs to change!
2. **Dream Sewing Spaces: Design & Organization for Spaces Large & Small by Lynette Ranney Black, a Palmer-Pletsch Publication** **(1996)** – This book set the standard for sewing room design. First published in 1996 and updated in 2010, and is still a big-name resource. Each sewing-related activity is broken down into the exact requirements demanded of a space. Ergonomics is as crucial to sewing as it is to any other physical activity. Tour real life sewing spaces, though many now look dated.
3. **Creating Your Perfect Quilting Space: Sewing-Room Makeovers for any space and any budget by Lois L Hallock (2005)** - Sewists tend to “make do” or de-prioritize their needs, but in reality, the number of hours we dedicate to making high-quality items warrants a carefully thought-out space. This book displays the full spectrum of small craft closets to 500 square foot workshops, and zero-budget reorganization to a full professional gut-job remodel. A great resource to visualize what you want to accomplish and how much change you’re willing to tackle.
4. **Love to Sew Podcast, episode 130 “Sewing Spaces”** *(* [*https://lovetosewpodcast.com/episodes/episode-130-sewing-spaces/*](https://lovetosewpodcast.com/episodes/episode-130-sewing-spaces/)*)*
5. **Declutter & Organize Your Sewing Space Podcast, 31 short episodes** *(*[*http://clearthedecks.co.uk/sewing-space*](http://clearthedecks.co.uk/sewing-space) *)*

Both podcasts discuss the pros and cons of where your sewing space is located. If it’s not right next to your main living area (on another floor of the house, say in the basement) you might feel tempted to forego sewing at the end of the day. But watching TV isn’t as fulfilling as creating and you get a little boost of energy when you push yourself to go create. The happiness and fulfilment is good for your health – so much so that some people liken it to “therapy.”

Focusing so much of your time and energy on changing your creative space may feel selfish at first. But the time you put in to organizing your space will make your work more efficient and more enjoyable. Make sewing a non-negotiable time. You benefit, your project’s recipient benefits, and those around you benefit from you feeling fulfilled.

**Also worth checking out for more visual inspiration:**

1. **Inside the Creative Studio** by Cate Coulacos Prato (2011)
2. **Quilters: Their Quilts, Their Stories, Their Studios** **(2013)** by Jo Packham (part of the Where Women Create series)
3. **Studio Spaces: Projects, inspiration, & ideas for your creative place (2011)** by (part of the Better Homes and Gardens series)
4. [**https://www.patchworkposse.com/organize-your-sewing-room/**](https://www.patchworkposse.com/organize-your-sewing-room/)Has a good list of solutions for specific items and activities.

# MASG Submitted Tips:

Cutting Table Ergonomics:

* A cutting table that is the right height is important. The table should be high enough for you to work from a standing position.
* Ikea “make your own tables.” You choose the table top and the type of legs you prefer.  The legs are very sturdy and most are adjustable. Or use the Ikea five drawer units for the perfect table height.
* Cutting table surface 30 x 60”
* Put a layer of batting or wool blankets under your cutting mat – you can push pins through the mat and hold projects in place more securely.
* Ikea tabletops come in many sizes.

My cutting table is actually two tables sandwiched together. It houses a small ironing board, a lightbox, organizes my rulers, and has an electrical outlet.

The desk surface is butcher block with a smooth epoxy glaze – no snagging any fabrics! It’s pretty, but not as craft-resistant as I had hoped. Laminate or a low/no finish wood surface would be better. Stone is great and heat resistant, but pricey.

Note on Universal Design – With age and compromised health in mind, consider future accessibility. I don’t often stand at my cutting table, so it’s slightly lower than others may prefer and I can cut from a seated position. My sewing surface is a bit higher than usual, to accommodate neck and back issues.

Fabric organization

* Use pre-cut “comic book boards,” or cut your own sheets of cardboard, to fold your fabric into uniformly sized stacks. These are easier to line up on a shelf and see what you have. This video explains it further: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxqk8EyZtMw>

I really love the efficiency of lined up fabric. Cottons fold well, but knits can be tricky. Roll up slippery fabric and use selvage cut-offs or ribbon scraps to bundle them up. Store them vertically in shallow drawers – no stacking!!

Fun sewing room features

* Most important items to include: A design wall, cutting table, pet beds, music, inspiring art work, vertical clear storage (preferably moveable.)
* Rustoleum magnetic paint - I love it for hanging pattern pieces, etc.  Use heavy duty magnets.

# Additional Tips – My favorite discoveries during the research phase…

* Dividers are great in a drawer. These drawer sections are made from wooden cadies and can be removed and used as kits. ***(drawer dividers)***
* A tip from kitchen design***, called kitting.*** “[Y]ou put your cooking utensils, pots, and pans near the stove; your dish soap and sponges the sink; and your storage containers near the refrigerator. The closer an item is to the place where it is needed, the better.” Does this sound like your kitchen? This helped me identify just why I’m so frustrated with my kitchen and it easily translates to the inefficiencies in my craft room as well.

Ikea sells some wooden boxes and drawer dividers like these to make your own caddies.

Kvarnvik storage box with lid $9.99

Fullfol… storage divider $5

Alex drawer unit $129

Pax and Komplement closet organizers

Dragan bamboo storage boxes $4.99, $9.99 (show kitting)

* Shallow drawers are an alternative to more exposed wooden peg thread shelves. In drawers, the threads can lay down to be viewable all at once and are safe from sun exposure. Use a spice rack insert to organize the rows. ***(inside the creative studio bins2)***
* Work triangle of sewing – put your pressing surface on your dominant hand’s side, otherwise you’ll always be tangled in cords!

# “DIY” is also spelled “Problem Solving”

Some of my most creative solutions come from using this formula:

* Identify the need or problem
* Define the restrictions
* Zoom out, generalize
* Explore unconventional avenues that accomplish the same end goal

Examples: power cord wall routing, iron holder

Phase 3 – Logistics

*Estimated construction time: March 2019 – June 2019, with the floors in by May 2019. (ha, ha… that was ambitious!)*

# What needs to be done before the remodel can begin?

\*\*Remodeling always displaces life into another area.

Closing off access to an area means heavier foot traffic in another. Not sure what that means? Put a piece of blue painter’s tape up across the designated area at least a week ahead of time, marking the space as closed. Go about your day and every time you encounter the tape, consider how you’ll need to move that activity somewhere else. Will your front door traffic now be going through the dining room? Will you need to install more baby locks or park your vehicles somewhere else? Strategize how to keep these areas unobstructed during their temporary re-arrangement.

Also, think about keeping a small stash of craft items in a new location while everything else is packed away.

\*\* Progress on other projects stops.

You won’t have time to work on other projects in the middle of a remodel (if you ever want it to end.) Think about what holidays, birthdays, or special events your space won’t be accessible for. What projects may come up?

\*\*More Considerations

Ask city about permits. Find ways to recycle and responsibly dispose of your construction waste.

* + Recycle carpet and pads at Sergenian’s
  + Rent construction debris bags
  + Donate supplies to Habitat for Humanity (call them first.) They will remove and haul away kitchen cabinets.

Finally, decide how you will get supplies to your house. Do you need to borrow a vehicle or trailer? Put the owner’s timeline into your own.

# What can I afford to do?

Our remodel cost $5,133 and took 40 weeks to complete. Here’s the breakdown of our expenses. I was VERY frugal with our spending which allowed us to afford to splurge on heated floors. (By the way, my joints are thankful for this feature EVERY DAY and I honestly put it in the “essential” category because it made our rec room so much more useable.

Flooring $292

Paint and stain $364

Construction and new pocket door $514

Electrician, heated floor $2,344

Candleplace $104

Hardware and trim $256

Cabinets and countertops $1,042

Decorative finishes $217

\*\*If you think it’s time to finally buy that one tool, you’re probably right.

For us, this included buying a decentstud finder, a brad nail gun, and two good respirator masks. Safety 1st : BUY A PLASTIC ZIPPER DOOR!! Do yourself a favor and buy a good pair of work gloves (that fit your hand size!)

# What is the order of business?

Rotating list, updated every few days

# How do I stay organized? There’s a LOT going on!!

I relied heavily on Dropbox. It's a free program that links multiple devices for file sharing. This is much more efficient than having to email myself every interesting picture or file. I can use my laptop and phone for research and always have access to the files I need. I invited my husband to share to the folder as well so he would always have an up-to-date timeline available.

* + I saved installation guides, manufacturers information, and product warranties.
  + I could save photos or scans grouped together – I could even make my own PDF reference guides.

Phase 4 – Action

*Estimated construction time: ~~March 2019 – June 2019~~*

*Actual construction time: March 2019 - December 2019 (We’re pretending that it’s “done”)*

When you feel like you’re as ready as you’ll ever be, dive in!

If you’ve done your homework, things should start to fall into place. (Ha, ha… construction never goes as planned!) NOW is the time you can start shopping!

# Shopping at Ikea

Craft rooms have become synonymous with Ikea, so I made a trip to Oak Creek to figure out what all the hype was about.

I bought:

* Adjustable wall-mounted lamps $8.99
* Under cabinet lighting $90
* Magnetic wall strip (holds my set of pliers) $14
* Curtain rods, hardware $40

In the end, I didn’t become an Ikea superfan. It’s ok, but I don’t understand the appeal. It’s also not super accessible.

# Shopping at the ReStore

I’m such a fan! I got some INCREDIBLE deals at the Restore and love their Mission!

The ReStore is like Goodwill and Home Depot combined. They sell supplies donated from business and individuals and the proceeds go to help build Habitat for Humanity homes. Some items are brand new or overstocks. Others were rejected from minor cosmetic issues or simply the wrong color ordered.

I especially love their trim, flooring, cabinets (individuals and sets), and hardware.

My favorite finds:

Rev-a-shelf $8

Tambour Door $4

Desk drawer $12

Laminate Flooring $100

Handles for the entire room $12

Spice drawer box $10

# Shopping online

I ordered lots of big things online and didn’t have to lug them through the store, including:

* Carpet padding
* Pocket door frame kit
* All heated floor elements

# DIY fundamentals

# It’s GO TIME! So… Put up a wall?!!

Before anything moves, **buy a zipper door** and staple it to the walls!! It’s a visual barrier as well as a dust barrier. We also put a baby gate in that doorway to keep pets out. Make sure that all kids (*and* guests *and* well-meaning in-laws…) know right away that the area is a **SHOES ONLY** zone and **ONLY with a parent**...

Know that every project will take 3x more trips to the hardware store than you planned. And when you’re still up at 2am because the thing won’t work… check **YouTube** for product installation guides.

Know what you don’t know, and respect those boundaries. There’s a difference between learning by doing and learning *haphazardly.* Find a friend or family member that can show you the ropes (or bail you out.) Do your research and hire professionals for any work you’re uncertified to do.

# Your gender has nothing to do with what you are capable of!

Just stating the obvious here.

Phase 5 – Share

Enjoy your new space! Use it to spread joy.

Much of sewing can be a solitary endeavor, but there is beauty in your act of creating. You’re doing *what you were meant to do.* Your space becomes something more than just a room - it enables you to live out your calling and find fulfillment.

# ReStore Project of the Year

One way I shared my room (and celebrated its completion) was by entering it into the Habitat for Humanity’s “Project of the Year” competition. While the room is not 100% made from ReStore materials, it embodies the “recycle/upcycle” spirit.

I'm a former pastry chef, now disabled stay-at-home DIYer. This project allowed me to contribute to my family at my own pace, on a budget, all while being eco-conscious. I love the circle of giving that's going on in this room: society traditionally values only certain types of workers and I'm no longer one of them. But I still have value and can make an impact. I'm a re-imagined, recycled worker using recycled goods!

I was overwhelmed and humbled with the AMAZING support I received from the ReStore and its fans. It was so popular that they asked me to share it with NBC 15. I keep joking with my husband that someday we’ll have the room to ourselves and it won’t be on public display all the time! But honestly, this room is meant to inspire and enable creativity, in any way possible.

Since the contest, we have hosted my daughter’s Girl Scout troop several times for sewing lessons and cookie booth sign making. If not for Quarantine, we would have hosted a few ladies’ crafting nights by now… so at least I’m glad to host all of you.

Thank you, MASG, for joining me this evening to talk about Sewing Room Design and for touring my room. I hope we can be together again soon, but we’ll confirm the details and logistics for our next meeting as soon as possible.

Thanks again and have a great night!