

ACCESSORIES

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Open Diff – What are your favorite garage hacks?

Kurt Ernst (<http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/author/kurt/>) on at 8:00 am



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*Old garage
photo by Les
Chatfield*

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/elsie/6612733/>.

Dan Beaudry's [recent article on a hose reel](#)



<http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/12/unravelling-an-automotive-inheritance-homemade-shop-tools/>), built from a Mobil oil can and handed down through generations, got us thinking about tips and tricks we've learned in the garage over the years. When it comes to garage wisdom, there's probably no source richer than the Hemmings Nation, since our readers probably have more collective wrenching experience, on the broadest variety of vehicles, than any other site on the Internet.

We'll tee things up with a few tips we've learned over the years, but feel free to chime in with your own (which we'll heartily embrace to make our lives easier).

- There's no such thing as "too organized" when disassembling something. Egg cartons, for example, make great temporary storage for nuts, washers and small bolts, and can be readily marked for easy reference. Which leads us to tip #2...
- Always keep a permanent marker in your tool box. In addition to labeling things (like egg cartons, for example), markers can be used to create handy alignment marks, wire identification marks, etc.
- We prefer propane soldering irons to electric ones, which never seem to have a long enough cord to reach where we want them. Propane soldering irons also come with a variety of tips, making them useful for heating shrink wrap tubing after soldering wires.
- Lying on a spare piece of cardboard is warmer than lying on a bare concrete floor or a poly tarp. Keep a large piece of cardboard around to make winter oil changes more comfortable.
- Preserve your shop manuals by copying just the pages needed for a particular task, and using these in the garage instead of the whole manual. Always read through the entire procedure (or, for the more tech-savvy, watch the YouTube video) before starting a job for the first time.
- When doing routine service, lay out the tools you'll need before you start wrenching. And trust us, you'll still forget one.
- Keep a garage chart for all your vehicles, listing tire pressure, oil type, capacity and date of last oil change. This beats fumbling through multiple manuals or searching multiple door jambs for the information.
- When saving parts, bag them and tag them for later identification. All of us have come across wayward spark plugs, plug wires or an air cleaner and wondered, "Hmm, what do these belong to?"
- Is the top of your wooden (or particle board) work bench beyond saving? Instead of rebuilding it or adding another sheet of plywood, glue a sheet of Formica (available at most home centers) to it. The end product will be surprisingly durable, chemical resistant and waterproof.
- Film canisters (remember them?) make an excellent place to store drain plug crush washers. Just remember to write what vehicle they belong to on the cap with the permanent marker.

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1968 MERCURY CYCLONE GT - \$28,500



1958 FORD FAIRLANE 500 - \$34,700



1904 OLDSMOBILE - \$45,000



1967 PONTIAC GRAND PRIX - \$14,998



1955 CHEVROLET BEL AIR - \$49,900

(<http://www.hemmings.com/classifieds/cars-for-sale/chevrolet/bel-air/1755507.html?refer=blog>)



1969 FORD TORINO COBRA - \$18,500

(<http://www.hemmings.com/classifieds/dealer/for-sale/ford/torino/cobra/1790017.html?refer=blog>)



1968 DODGE DART - \$19,500

(<http://www.hemmings.com/classifieds/cars-for-sale/dodge/dart/1789877.html?refer=blog>)



1957 CHRYSLER CROWN IMPERIAL - \$46,500

(<http://www.hemmings.com/classifieds/dealer/for-sale/chrysler/crown-imperial/1784840.html?refer=blog>)

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Bert says: November 17, 2015 8:41 am

Always have a charged fire extinguisher prominently located, and know how to use it. I've never needed mine but just in case...

➔ Reply (<http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9137572#respond>)



Bert says: November 17, 2015 8:44 am

Another thought, we could have an entire open diff on freeing/removing rusty fasteners. I have a few tricks that work for me, one where heat can be applied and one where it can't.

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Kurt Ernst says: November 17, 2015 9:01 am

Bert, good suggestion – thanks.

➤ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9137622#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9137622#respond)



Kahpentah says: November 17, 2015 8:46 am

Instead of cardboard, invest in a 2'x8'x1" pink foam panel available at any home center. So comfortable you can stay for a nap under your vehicle.

➤ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9137592#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9137592#respond)



Kurt Ernst says: November 17, 2015 9:02 am

Kahpentah, yes, but where's the suffering in that? Good tip!

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Gooberbob says: November 17, 2015 10:31 am

A thin foam sleeping mat designed for long distance hikers is even better because you can roll it up for storage.

➤ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138302#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138302#respond)



econobiker says: November 17, 2015 12:40 pm

In the cause of recycling, I prefer scraps of home interior carpet. Turned right side up and it is plush yet will swallow small fasteners and catch on your clothing, turned bottom side up it tends to be sandpaper like but is flat and insulates better from the ground.

➤ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139241#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139241#respond)



Dan says: November 17, 2015 9:22 am

I also like to keep grease pencils on hand, as grease pencil can be removed easier than permanent marker. (Hand sanitizer can remove permanent marker that's up to a week old, I've found.) Grease pencils were invaluable when I worked in aviation.

And after some time getting used to the new layout, I have a suggestion: I would like to see a "search blog" function added. I tried to do just that, and wound up searching the classifieds instead.

➤ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9137801#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9137801#respond)



Kurt Ernst says: November 17, 2015 11:23 am

Dan, when you use the search at the top of the page, it allows you to search for Vehicles, Parts or Articles. Just be sure to select "Articles" from the pull-down menu, and this will bring up all

articles, from all Hemmings publications, on a particular topic. You can further narrow the search by publication, too.

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138711#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138711#respond)



Dan says: November 17, 2015 1:13 pm

Thanks for passing that info on, Kurt.

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139572#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139572#respond)



51 Ford Guy says: November 17, 2015 9:22 am

Bleed brake lines with a vacuum oil change outfit. Once it is pumped up, it holds much more liquid (x200?) than a regular bleeder tool's small container. It also hold a greater amount of vacuum, for a longer bleeding time period. I use a short piece of rubber hose to make the transition from the vac's relatively hard hose to the bleeder valve's top. It works very well.

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9137802#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9137802#respond)



Allan says: November 17, 2015 9:29 am

Buy vinyl electrical tape in rolls with a small center hole and quit using it when there's about 1/4" left. Save it for wrapping wires in tight quarters like under the dash.
To start a bolt or nut in a hard to reach place, put a small piece of paper over the nut or head of the bolt, then push a socket on. The paper will hold the bolt/nut in the socket and you can start it without dropping it.

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9137881#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9137881#respond)



geomechs says: November 17, 2015 9:34 am

Interesting that the guy whose shop is in the photo has somewhat of a fetish for Lister diesel engines.

I use a creeper to slide around under my cars. Sorry but I've done the slide around on cardboard trick for too long. Of course, if you're outside then your choices are severely limited.

My wife and I were in one of the Big-Box stores and I came across some heavy duty steel shelf units. I bought three eight-foot units and set them up between the two bays of my shop. Nothing better than having those to put parts in when you're tearing something down.

Coffee cans are among the best ways to organize those little pieces. When I tore my GMC down I used numerous paper sacks. Unfortunately the mice took a liking to some of those sacks and chewed away everything but the ink from the permanent marker. Thank God I had a good parts book, not to mention working in a GM dealership for a few years...

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9137902#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9137902#respond)



Raymond Costa says: November 17, 2015 11:54 am

I like to use the plastic containers that nuts and candies and other food come in. I save these and use them in the garage. You can see what's in there, they stay closed, they don't break and I can throw a paper label inside to let me know what's there if I forget. I also use 3"x4" (aprox.) brown envelopes with glued flaps for holding nuts, bolts, etc. These are big enough to hold 4 spark plugs. You can write on them with a pencil. I bought a box of 1000 years ago and still have about half left. I put all the containers and envelopes on a set of shelves for each project. As the parts get cleaned and refinished they go back into a clean envelope or container and get transferred to a second set of shelves until they are ready to install. Organization style is

personal, but organization is key to a successful project.

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138851#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138851#respond)



Fred says: November 17, 2015 1:47 pm

Any clear plastic container is good. They don't break and you can see what's inside them.

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139691#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139691#respond)



Jeff Burdzinski says: November 17, 2015 9:40 am

Use clothesline pins with drawn numbers on them to quickly remember where all your spark plug wires go!

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Raymond Costa says: November 17, 2015 11:54 am

Good Idea! Beats using masking tape.

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138861#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138861#respond)



Bob Austin says: November 17, 2015 9:42 am

Great story! Great ideas for garage organization and uncommon uses for common materials. But, as a frequent Garage Sale visitor let me give you all one word of warning..... When you go into a garage where every single nut, bolt, and screw is perfectly sorted and stored in a jelly jar, film canister, or an actual parts bin...you can rest assured the man who put them there has passed away.

This has lead me to the conclusion that excessive organization can lead to premature death! In an effort to avoid this unfortunate outcome, I always keep a little clutter in my garage. One or two dismantled cars seems to have done the trick so far. I may need a stronger prescription moving forward.

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Robert says: November 17, 2015 11:17 am

Wow, if that is the case, I am golden to over 100 😊

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Daniel Beaudry says: November 17, 2015 9:49 am

Two things that immediately come to mind are a silver permanent marker—which makes marks stand out on darker surfaces like black chassis—and, for the guys who are working on vehicles old enough, or fast enough, to require safety-wired nuts, safety wire twist pliers (like those used in aeronautical applications) are more efficient and yield more consistent twists than a pair of standard pliers being used to make the twists manually.

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John C. Koval says: November 17, 2015 10:37 am

Hey, Daniel, jobbers and places like Fastenal have colored paint markers in just about any color, and they hold up better than markers [no fade]

BTW, how long until Junior asks: "Daddy, what's a film can?"

➤ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138372#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138372#respond)



Daniel Beaudry says: November 17, 2015 10:47 am

Those are both good points, and I've had cause for colors other than silver, so I'll pick up some paint markers.

And I'm thinking that junior would already be lost if you use the term "film can." Probably anyone born within the last 15 years or more would be clueless. Likewise, the film cans will probably begin to get scarce. Start listing them on eBay! 😊

➤ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138451#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138451#respond)



Kurt Ernst says: November 17, 2015 11:11 am

Not a chance. I'm hoarding my film cans.

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Howard Arbiture says: November 17, 2015 12:20 pm

Hi Daniel, those film canister's were all used up in the 60's and 70's for other purposes.



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Kurt Ernst says: November 17, 2015 12:38 pm

Like storing breath mints, right Howard?

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Howie says: November 17, 2015 12:43 pm

And how does Howard know that?

➤ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139262#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139262#respond)



Howard Arbiture says: November 17, 2015 1:56 pm

Hi Howie, come to think of it, there seemed to be a lot more containers than photographers back then.



Howard Arbiture says: November 17, 2015 10:04 am

Where to begin? I took apart a lawn mower engine almost 50 years ago (never did get it put back together, the old man wasn't too happy about THAT either) and have been wrenching ever since. Hanging around construction equipment and trucks all my (working) life, so many shortcuts and and tips, although to bring together in a discussion like this, is pretty hard. Many times, while working on something (currently working for a farm friend as a part-time mechanic) certain things will come to mind, that I've observed, and put to use.

Naturally, as said, necessity is the mother of invention, and I can't tell you how many wrenches or tools I've bent or altered to remove a certain "hidden" bolt, (like the inside bolt on a BC Cummins air compressor) or asked an old-timer how they did it and no, I never bought the "special dealer

tool” to do that.

One tool I’ve found worth its weight, are those grabby things, where you push the plunger and the little fingers come out. Saved me many times. Or as Bert sez, rusted fasteners. Unless the project is brand new, one is always going to deal with rusted fasteners. I’ve found, lot’s of (insert brand name) spray and easy does it. Back and forth.

One thing I’ve found, is rubber mats (whatever kind you use) are the best to lay on (even cardboard gets cold)

I’ll admit, (and I’m not alone) but I am kind of an “aloof” mechanic. I set tools down and forget where they are, or make 5 trips to the toolbox to get the right tool, and don’t always use the most orthodox methods, or the classic “pile of bolts” (which usually comes from too many irons in the fire at once) but I’ve always got it going (except that lawn mower engine way back) and give a lot of credit to those people that make a living at it. It’s very hard on the body, as I’m reliving with this part-time job.

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Dave B. says: November 17, 2015 10:06 am

One organizing trick I started using a few years ago is to put the date I replace a battery prominently on the top of the new battery using a label maker. I find that this helps keep track of the age of batteries in the cars, boat, motorcycle, etc.

➤ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138151#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138151#respond)



econobiker says: November 17, 2015 1:10 pm

On more plebian cars I have written the date and mileage of the car on when replacing parts on the actual part itself with either the above mentioned black or silver marker or paint marker when the parts are not exposed to direct viewing by the public. So I know that the CV axles were replaced 12/01/09 at 156,819 miles because its written on them.

➤ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139552#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139552#respond)



Charlie says: November 17, 2015 10:20 am

I like to recycle plastic jars from mayo, peanut butter, nuts, etc. with colored screw on tops. These have replaced glass, metal, wood, coffee containers, and open bins. They are clear and the tops lend themselves to color coding. They don’t break when dropped and the tops screw on tight. They come in various sizes as well. They work equally well for storing hardware, liquids, powders, just about anything you can fit in them. Insects and small furry animals stay out of them. Using them for storage keeps them out of landfills too. It just takes cleaning them out and making sure their original contents (like salt) will not attack their new contents.

➤ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138212#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138212#respond)



Bruce T. says: November 17, 2015 10:24 am

If you live in the snow belt and are building a new garage, install a large floor drain. Nothing worse than working under a car on a wet cold floor.

➤ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138261#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138261#respond)



John C. Koval says: November 17, 2015 10:25 am

Gosh, where does Mr. Garage Hack start?

“Disposable” packaging is amazingly durable; I needed a holder for my [fuel oil furnace] oil

pressure gauge, about 15" of rubber hose w. gauge and fittings – I curled it up and stuck it in an empty cut-down dishwashing detergent plastic bottle. Thirty-five years later, it's STILL in service!

Likewise 1 gal. empty metal cans [acetone, laquer thinner, etc.] laid on their side and cut open make nice dividers for yer tool box[es]. smaller cans likewise work.

Keep losing small parts?? Start saving empty parmesan cheese, mayonnaise, or other plastic jars of aprx one pint size, and keep them in a bin. Pull one out and use it when necessary, then put the empty back in the bin.

But why one pint size?? Because if you put SMALL parts in a SMALL container, [or worse yet, a plastic bag.] you simply lost the container instead of the part[s]. It works, believe me.

Take an empty propane cylinder, make sure it's fully discharged, then drill a small hole on its shoulder, then another one 180 degrees away. If you have a Unibit, ream it out to 1/2" or so. Lay it on its side in a well-ventilated place, hole down, for a couple of days, then cut off the threaded end and part of the top. Carefully round any sharp edges, and screw onto the base of your torch. You can now protect the torch from dirt and store it without it having to keep it screwed on the tank all the time. Use the plastic cap that came with the tank when you bought it to keep the tank end dirt-free.

HVAC people routinely take a 4" piece of white PVC pipe, glue a cap on one end and a cleanout [sleeve with internal threads that take a square-headed plug] on the other, mount it on the roof rack of their truck, and use it for safely storing ACR copper and other pipe that needs to be kept dry. Likewise, a shorter length is ideal for storing welding rods in a damp environment, and smaller diameters are handy for, say, keeping small assortments of sawzall blades, drill bits, etc. in your tool box when they're needed.

Need a structure for holding something, or putting up plastic to improvise a spray booth, etc? Remember the green thumb crowd routinely use PVC and CPVC pipe and fittings to frame out temporary greenhouses and covers. Think of the plastic plumbing pipe section of the Big Box store as a giant Tinkertoy and you might be going there regularly. AND if you don't glue the joints it's re-purposable.

I never use reels for hoses or extension cords; instead, I devise a hook or hanger just above shoulder height, and keep them in long loops – they're less likely to tangle, and you grab as many loops as you need without them pulling back, or having to crank with one hand and feed with the other.

You can't be too organized, whether it be tools or parts. I have two carts, and try to keep tools on one, parts on the other, at least for the bigger jobs. The tool cart has a built-in power strip so all yer corded tools stay there with a minimum of cord tangling. For the parts I generally keep the new on top, used get thrown on the bottom. BUT if yer laying on the cement working on the car, reverse the procedure.

Likewise keep as much useful-looking junk around as practicable [or at least as much as the Old Lady will put up with.] Recently I needed a top interior shelf for my truck, and had need for what I call "clang" metal – thicker than sheet metal, thinner than plate stock, if you drop a piece on the floor it's stiff enough to Clang! when it hits. Anyway, a pair of cheap auto ramps, now discarded and in the junk pile, had just enough flat area that I could cut out and hammer into a pair of stiff brackets that were perfect for the job.

Try to keep discarded metal sorted by thickness, keep some usable plastic around, esp. if it's flat ABS or nylon, and you can't have too much rod, wire, etc. laying around.

"ELECTION WIRE": after the General Election is over, I go around picking signs up and saving those wire hoops they mount on – VERY handy. EVEN HANDIER STILL is that new "plastic cardboard" they're starting to use!

1. It's completely waterproof, and so you can use pieces of it anywhere.
2. It's insulating, greaseproof, and easy to clean, so it's IDEAL to lay on when working on a cold floor.
3. Its oilproof properties make it ideal for keeping yer floor stain-free while working on yer car.
4. It's IDEAL for pattern-making; it's tough yet cuts easily, holds its shape wet or dry, and is stiff enough to be virtually wrinkle- and crease-proof.
5. It's FREE! Next election, when you see those VOTE FOR JUDGE HURBLEMEYER signs, make a route

the morning after and “liberate” them all. People will merely think you’re a volunteer.

Finally, don’t forget to consider the glorious, back-warming, car-drying WARMTH of Radiant Floor Heating if putting in a new floor or building a new garage.

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138262#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138262#respond)



Kurt Ernst says: November 17, 2015 11:18 am

Bravo, sir – thanks John!

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138671#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138671#respond)



Jim Mc says: November 17, 2015 12:42 pm

Now that’s what I call recycling!

Especially about the wire. I was just thinking about posting one about the value of twist-ties.

Twist ties are thinner and more flexible and can be used in areas where zip ties can’t. An

example of this is that a few weeks ago I was replacing the air filter in my daily driver F-150.

While doing so, I broke the old metal clamp that wraps all the way around the filter box. I

simply drilled a small hole through the two halves of the filter box and ran a twist tie through

there and wrapped it tight until I could get to the Ford dealer and order the correct part. It

worked great! That twist tie is now a permanent fixture in my tool box.

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139261#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139261#respond)



Scot Carr says: November 17, 2015 10:27 am

~ following

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138282#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138282#respond)



Graham Lloyd says: November 17, 2015 10:27 am

2 thoughts for storing ungainly parts.

Shelving supply houses can supply you with the tracking that screws into the wall and the shelf brackets that clip into it. The stuff you see generally used for glass shelves in display cabinets. I have 3 of them set up in my garage to store bumpers. I have a variety of length brackets to accommodate various depth bumpers. The hooked end keeps them from falling off due to compressor vibrations, etc. Use 3” decking screws to get the tracking well anchored into the studs.

The strapping used to secure duct work to rafters (with the alternating large and small holes) is great for hanging parts and other stuff on walls. Wrap it around the part, and as you screw it into the stud, it will tighten up around the part. Again, 3” decking screws. I’ve also used this idea for transporting exhaust pipes on a wooden deck car trailer. Do it right, and it will never move.

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138291#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138291#respond)



John C. Koval says: November 17, 2015 12:19 pm

Around here, I use #12 by 2” drill screws. They’re tough enough that you can hang two or three hundred pounds on one screw, but go in/out easily with a 3/8” magnetic chuck in a 12V or 18+V cordless drill. I keep them in a container, rusty or no, and have re-used some four or five times; outside, all rusted holding a tarp down for three or four years, they go back into the bin, and still work just fine.

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139082#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139082#respond)



KFoss says: November 17, 2015 10:35 am

All so very true.

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138351#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138351#respond)



KFoss says: November 17, 2015 10:36 am

All so very true

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138361#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138361#respond)



Brian64SS says: November 17, 2015 11:15 am

One of those small wall-mounted parts bins with about 50 transparent drawers is great for small parts and tools that get lost in a toolbox drawer. Here's what I keep in mine: Air chucks, tire gauges, blow guns, spare quick connects and other air compressor supplies, spare headlight, tail light and other bulbs, gasket sealer, small tubes of lithium, di-electric and disc brake grease, valve stems, wheel weights and other tire plugging and tire changing supplies, wiring terminals, razor blades and scrapers, feeler gauges....

Keeping things off the floor makes cleaning easier. Hanging cabinets or steel shelving from the walls or ceiling is a big help. Chemicals, safety glasses and stuff are in a wall-hung cabinet and out of view. Table saw is on wheels and stores under the bottom of ceiling-hung shelving.

Leave blower or air-compressor blow gun are great for cleaning around the things that don't move like heavy cabinets and workbench.

I like old signs on the walls. I rescued some (with permission) from an old service station that was being torn down. They say Stop Motor While Fueling, No Smoking Near Pumps and my favorite: All Parts and Labor Must be Paid For In Cash Unless Prior Arrangements Are Made.

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138632#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138632#respond)



Laguna Mike says: November 17, 2015 11:27 am

Don't forget prescription drug containers. They are usually clear and a Sharpie or Dymo labels can be used to identify what is in them. Sharpie on the container or the lid or both. Acetone will remove the ink if you want to use them again. I prefer the Dymo labels. They come of with lighter fluid.

I also got a bunch of closet shelf brackets that I bent a 90 degree angle on the end. After I screwed them to the wall I had a great place to store lumber, PVC pipe, conduit, etc. The wasted space behind the garage door rails is a good place for these. These also work well for storing hoses and extension cords.

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138721#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138721#respond)



John Weinhoef says: November 17, 2015 11:31 am

Plastic zip lock bags are great for storing smaller items and easy to label.

Left over drawer assemblies from under water beds work well as storage containers when stacked up; I use plywood sheets over the top so I can pile things on top also. You can assign one drawer to each car for spare and removed but still usable parts.

All kinds of chests of drawers are good. The best I've found are old hospital rooms chests: metal and formica so they are pretty much indestructible and a lot of them are mounted on casters so they can be easily moved around as needed.

If you are the type who just throws screws in one can, nuts in another, etc., a few old 8 x 16 or so cookie trays or cake pans laying around are useful. You can dump out the can to sort through and

find what you need, then fairly easily pick up the rest.

If you have the luxury of putting a bathroom in your garage, use one of the plastic wash tubs for the sink. You can fit lots of parts in a sink that size.

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138751#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138751#respond)



Howie says: November 17, 2015 11:35 am

A good old radio blasting away.

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138752#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138752#respond)



Jim Mc says: November 17, 2015 12:45 pm

Right on Howie! Can't do any wrenchin' without some Lynyrd Skynyrd playin'!

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139281#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139281#respond)



Howie says: November 17, 2015 1:17 pm

So no Justin Bieber or Taylor Swift?

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139632#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139632#respond)



Bob Palma says: November 17, 2015 11:43 am

More of a library than shop tip, but nonetheless:

To safely store large pieces of automobile literature (showroom brochures, etc), beg or pay for several new, LARGE as possible, pizza boxes from your local pizzeria. You can fill them with literature and classify it however you want.

They stack nicely on top of a filing cabinet or elsewhere. The literature is stored flat, covered both top and bottom, without putting any weight on the pieces other than the other pieces in the same box. BP

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138801#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138801#respond)



Raymond Costa says: November 17, 2015 12:03 pm

Nobody has mentioned wire coat hangers. These can be re-purposed to hang small parts for painting, as stiff wire to pull things through holes and tubes, temporary brackets, temporary clamps. I even carry a few in my car in case of emergency. Plastic tie-wraps come in as a close second for all-purpose repairs.

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138942#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138942#respond)



Scotty G says: November 17, 2015 12:04 pm

Wow! This is a treasure trove of ideas. I laughed out loud at quite a few comments; very good stuff. Anytime that a person can learn a heck of a lot and also laugh a heck of a lot at the same time, that's a good day, in my book.

Does anyone have any experience, or any ideas, on what type of garage flooring to use, or *not* to use? (Upper-Midwest with winter and snow six months of the year; two cars in a two-car garage). Patch, prep, and epoxy or some type of interlocking tile (Swisstrax / RaceDeck / etc.)? I know that there may be different circumstances for each situation, but, in general, what has worked or what hasn't worked for you? (sorry, I don't know if it's kosher to solicit tips or not)

➤ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138962#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9138962#respond)



Kurt Ernst says: November 17, 2015 12:19 pm

Scotty, it's completely kosher. My preference is poured epoxy, but it's expensive to have done.

➤ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139091#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139091#respond)



old Bill says: November 17, 2015 12:17 pm

I have entered the part numbers for various common replacement parts as 'contact' numbers on my cell phone. (It may be a 'smart phone', but it doesn't know a friend's phone number from an oil filter's part number !) I have also found taking photos on my cell phone, as I remove a component, has been a valuable tool on reassembly. My memory has not improved with age.

➤ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139081#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139081#respond)



econobiker says: November 17, 2015 1:04 pm

Digital photography and cell phone cameras have exploded in helping to document disassembly and reassembly of parts. Just don't forget to save the pictures somewhere safe like on a computer and/or internet based storage point (like dropbox or similar) or even email the pictures to yourself and file in a folder for that project.

➤ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139492#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139492#respond)



econobiker says: November 17, 2015 1:00 pm

2x4 jackstands:

Salvaged 2x4 scraps cut down to a specific length then stacked in pairs with a space between each pair and glued plus nailed together to make square "jackstands". This included putting squares of scrap plywood on the ends and a rope through the holes between the 2x4s in order to make a handle to pull them out from under a car and to carry them with. One edition is approximately 8" square x 10" tall just tall enough to change small car oil, the second pair and 2nd edition is 2x the first size maybe 12" square x 14" tall to change a small pickup truck oil. And then NOTE- these can also be turned on their side to get the slightly lower height of the square profile 8" or 12" as the 2x4s still hold up the weight even on the side.

Alot safer than concrete blocks and alot easier to lower the car onto the top of these without even worrying about getting a metal jackstand placed "just right". Multiple uses such as stacking them together to make a quick stand to spray paint something.

➤ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139452#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139452#respond)



econobiker says: November 17, 2015 1:01 pm

Write the size of the oil drain bolt sockets on the inside of the tool box in magic marker. If a car is retired, then cross it off or use paint thinner to remove the marker.

➤ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139482#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139482#respond)



Phoebe says: November 17, 2015 1:39 pm

I use a grease marker or paint pen and write the size of the drain bolt right on the oil pan of the car. I've never had it come off on its own. I like your idea too, though!

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139681#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139681#respond)



old Bill says: November 17, 2015 1:14 pm

One more! I buy the cheap (\$5 or so, for 12 pair at Harbor freight) brown cotton Jersey gloves. They are great for engine compartment cleaning/detailing. A spritz of rubber protectant on the gloves then a quick massage on any hoses does an overspray free and efficient job. Tires can also be treated neatly in the same manner. Depending on use, they can often be washed and reused. Stick a pair or two in the daily driver for emergency use. BONUS, they can even be used to keep your hands warm!

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139582#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139582#respond)



Doowopper says: November 17, 2015 1:15 pm

For removing stripped screws I use Screw-Grabber friction compound. Can't imagine not having it around. I think valve grinding compound would work too. Just put a drop on the tip of your screwdriver.

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139602#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139602#respond)



Kurt says: November 17, 2015 1:50 pm

Here is a tip for those with limited work space, like me. Get a pair of those reinforced plastic saw horses that fold up nice and thin. Then, throw an old hollow-core door on top. Voila! Extra work space. When done for the day, the whole package stands up next to my workbench taking up maybe four or five inches of space. This one may seem kind of obvious but I can put that thing up or take it down in 10 seconds, without hurting my back!

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139701#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139701#respond)



Phoebe says: November 17, 2015 1:54 pm

This is probably an obvious one, but on my four-way lug wrench, I have a piece of yellow tape wrapped around the arm of the one that fits the lug nuts of my car.

I've saved a couple of motorcycle inner tubes (they are sturdier than bicycle ones) and used them for padding on flat-topped jackstands and on blocks of wood between a jack and jacking point. I attach the rubber to the wood block by wrapping it around the block on three sides and stapling just the sides.

Lately I've been using a 50/50 mix of acetone and ATF as a penetrating lubricant. They separate from each other, so you'll have to shake the container, then use it. I use both an old-fashioned squeeze-style oil can as well as 10cc industrial syringes. I don't know how it works, but it does, and I'm going to keep on using it.

Sugru. Buy some, store it in the fridge. You will find a million uses for it in the garage and everywhere else. Trust me on this.

Don't be afraid to think outside the box when it comes to tools. Recently, since I couldn't get the right size tool to install the pressed-in ball joints on my Civic, I improvised with a modified black steel pipe fitting that cost me a few dollars. I do "Swamp Yankee engineering" things like that all the time and I don't even think to write them down or anything. I know there's a bunch more I've done over the years.

➔ [Reply \(http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139741#respond\)](http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139741#respond)



Kurt Ernst says: November 17, 2015 2:05 pm

Phoebe, in the thinking-outside-the-box category, Lemon Pledge is the best black steel wheel dressing I've ever found. Also, scissor jacks make great impromptu presses, as long as you've got two solid surfaces to work with.

➤ **Reply** (<http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2015/11/17/open-diff-what-are-your-favorite-garage-hacks/?replytocom=9139812#respond>)

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