

There are many qualities that sports instill in youngsters – teamwork, perseverance and sportsmanship just to name a few. However, neatness and organization are not included in that list. In fact, it seems the more active a young person is, the more likely they are to leave their sports gear strewn throughout the house, car and garage. It's hard to blame them, really. They scarcely have enough time between games to put everything back in its place.

One way to help kids out is to provide a place that's all their own, and seems very familiar, for them to store and organize their equipment. Here is my take on the classic sports locker. The biggest difference is that I made this one a little larger and added some storage and organization features that typical lockers don't have.

For example, an upper and lower shelf offer plenty of stackable storage, and a couple of a baskets (available at any home center) make it easy to corral items that otherwise don't store well. And by using pegboard for the back panel of the locker, you create almost infinite storage possibilities and ensure complete ventilation of the locker.

But don't think for a moment that this locker is just for kids. This would also be a great place to store your own gear, including golf clubs (though you may have to eliminate the top shelf depending on how tall your set is)

And while the garage seems like the obvious place to keep your lockers, with the right paint job, these could be just as at home in a mudroom, enclosed porch or basement

Best of all, the construction is incredibly simple – just a box built of medium density fiberboard (MDF) or other plywood, some pocket hole joints, a bit of glue and a handful of nails.

Make Your Case

To get started, cut the locker sides to size with your circular saw. You'll want to use an edge guide of some sort to ensure these cuts are as accurate and straight as possible.

When both sides are cut to size, use your jigsaw to cut a 3½" x 3½" notch in the bottom front corner of each panel. This will create the toekick space when the locker is assembled.

Next, use your handheld router with a rabbeting bit to rout a rabbet in the back edge of each side. This rabbet will accept the pegboard back panel when it's time.

With that done, you can cut your top and bottom panels to size. This is another good job for your circular saw and edge guide.

Drill pocket holes in the top and bottom panels so you can assemble the basic locker pieces. As you assemble the locker, arrange the panels so the case is lying on its front edge. This will give you access to the rabbeted back edge so you can easily install the pegboard back panel.

Speaking of which, measure between the rabbets and also from top to bottom and cut the pegboard panel to fit. Use glue and finish nails to attach the panel to the locker.



Shelves

Now turn the case over onto its back. Then cut the shelves to size and then roundover both front edges of the shelves.

Next, drill pocket holes in the bottom face of each shelf. Mount shelves inside the case. I positioned the upper shelf 12" down from the case top and the lower shelf 18" up from the case bottom. The lower shelf was the crucial one because I wanted to fit two store-bought baskets underneath it, so the size of the baskets is what drove the location of this shelf. Check the dimensions of the drawers or baskets you plan to use and adjust the lower shelf location accordingly.

Bolster the Base

Although you can't see it in the photos, I did beef up the footing on this case. The locker is already built with weighty material, and by the time you pack it full of sports gear, the entire thing gets to be quite heavy, so a bit of extra strength is a good idea here. I doubled the thickness of the "base" by adding a cleat to each case side underneath the case bottom. The cleats are held in with glue and screws - but before you put them in, drill pocket holes on the front end of each cleat.

Once the cleats are in place. Cut the toekick to size and attach it with glue and pocket screws.

Size the Door

While the locker is still on its back is a good time to take some measurements and cut the door to size. I built the case with a "full overlay" door that covers all the edges of the main casework. After you've measured and cut the door slab to size, rout a 1/4" roundover on all of the door edges except the edge where the hinge will be mounted.

As for the hinge, I selected 60" continuous, or piano hinge, to support the weight of the door. But forget about those tiny little brass screws that come with the hinge. I tossed those out and used #6 x 3/4" Flathead Woodscrews in their place. It makes for a much sturdier installation of a door that is likely to see some rough closings.

Go ahead and hang the door now, just to check the fit and operation. But once you're satisfied, remove the door and hinge to make painting the locker easier.

Add Some Color

This is your chance to really personalize the locker. After applying a good coat of primer, paint the locker in the colors of a favorite sports team. You can even add decals once the paint is dried to give the locker that special touch.

When the painting and decorating is finished, re-hang the door and install a couple of slide-out baskets or ventilated drawers to help organize equipment that doesn't easily stack or hang.

Hangers and Hooks

And speaking of hanging, you'll want to pick up a selection of pegboard hooks and hangers to fill out the back panel. I'll leave it to you to choose which of the countless varieties of these items best support your equipment, but rest assured you'll have little trouble finding something that will hold almost everything.

On the other hand, you may want to build some custom hangers, like the one I built for hanging baseball and softball bats, or maybe the simple rack I built for storing baseballs and softballs. I made mine from scrap material I had lying around the shop.

Bat Pull

The final touch on my locker was the baseball bat door pull. This is just one of those novelty bats that you can pick up at any ballpark. I use a couple of long carriage bolts and some nuts to mount the bat. Feel free to vary this theme to your own tastes. Perhaps a hockey stick or an old golf club would make a pull more suited to your sporting endeavors. The important thing is to make the locker just as much fun to use as the gear it houses.

Okay, almost as much fun.