Get Organized Week #2  Brainstorming

Materials Needed
Camera and computer to post a photo

The Challenges
To dream about your ideal studio, find a solution for one problem area, take photos and begin to take charge.

Welcome to Week #2 of Scrapbook.com’s 27-week Get Organized Challenge! Hopefully you’ve gone through the process of scrapping a layout and now have in-hand a completed layout and a Space Assessment Handout filled in which identifies your problem areas. This week your challenges are to discover why these areas are hindering your scrapbooking experiences, and what you can, and want to do, to fix the problems. I also encourage you to take photos of your space, and invite you to post one or two of them in the Get Organized Gallery.

First on this week’s challenge list--dreaming. Take a deep breath and leave your current world behind. While exhaling say to yourself several times, “relax.” Imagine you just woke up from 12 hours of uninterrupted sleep and you’re refreshed. Now, head to your studio, or the space you’re transforming into your studio. You’re welcomed by a red carpet that flows to magnificent French doors, which lead into your space. The glorious Scrap Fairy has been there, leaving you the place of your dreams! It’s clean and free of dust and clutter. It’s organized and only has tools and supplies you are looking forward to using.

Stay relaxed and in this wonderful dream state; keep breathing deeply. What else do you see? Are tools and paper in country woven baskets or are they in sleek metal tins? Are there labels on containers, or do you just “know” where every supply is? Are your bottles of paint lined up on a shelf in ROY G. BIV order, or are they stashed in a drawer? Is your paper in racks, or behind the doors of cupboards? Does the space feel like the loft of a Manhattan artist, a cozy room in a southern cottage, or maybe like the porch of a beach house? This is YOUR dream room. There is no right and no wrong. This is the place you’ll spend much of your time and creative energy, so start envisioning what you want. Remember, this is just brainstorming and dreaming so let go of budget and space constraints. We’ll deal with those later. For now, just have fun imagining the possibilities.

Let’s move to reality and address problem areas with confidence. Locate your filled-in Space Assessment Handout from last week and isolate the first problem area. Think about it and write down every thought that might come to you: why it’s a problem, what would make it easier, and how can you improve it? Remember your dream space has no problems and we’re aiming for a real space that is full of solutions. Envision yourself in the space, creating the layout you did in Week #1. How would the experience be different?
Let’s take a look at an example of what a person might experience during this week if purchased kits were the first problem noted on their Space Assessment Handout. Suppose their kits were stored in plastic bags, and all bags were lined up on a desk, pushed back against the wall; when one was removed the rest fell over. In a dream space there would be a way to keep the bags upright, in order, and off the desk. Maybe there would be a specific cabinet, drawer or bin for kits, or maybe they’d be in bags on designated shelves with bookends to help keep them upright. Perhaps the bags could hang from skirt hangers on a rod attached to the wall, or in a closet. All of these options could work, or maybe one would work better for you. Are you getting the picture of how fun and easy it is to dream, and wish, and hope?

All areas of a studio are addressed in this course so if something shows up as a problem, there will be solutions and ideas in the coming weeks. For example: if kits showed up as a problem on your Space Assessment Handout, jot down kit organization possibilities. Then in Week #8, when we discuss kits (or sooner if you work ahead), you may find something related to hanging, or using upright containers for kits that will work for you. But by jotting down ideas and thoughts now, you’ll have a good start with how to fix the problem later. And, if you can’t think of any solutions, that’s okay too. Leave that area blank, and know you’ll fill it in as the weeks progress.

Please don’t address budget and space yet, (I know that might be a concern). Instead, focus on one practical aspect of scrapbooking: how you work. I know many in this challenge have seen beautiful scrap rooms they’d sacrifice for - but those spaces you long for might not be what are best for you. If you have small children who get into everything, open shelves at kid eye-level are not going to work for you, no matter how pretty they are, or how much you love them. You and your children will just get frustrated with that option. If you have one small surface to work on, don’t drool over a desktop tool caddy that will take up half of that space. If you’re a sitting scrapper, don’t look into counters that will require you to stand as you work. Keep your habits, likes, dislikes, and reality in mind. You CAN have a fabulous space, one based on your own terms, where you will enjoy working.

You can own the things you would like to, someday. But first, I want you to rule out any storage solution that won’t work in your space no matter how appealing or pretty. If something won’t work in your space, keep it on a wish list and stick to what does work, currently.

The final step in this week’s challenge is to take pictures of your space as it is. I think this is a great motivational tool. It’s not meant to discourage you, but rather to enlighten. I’d like to invite you to post a photo or two in our gallery. By doing so you’re going to find that there are spaces out there much, much worse than yours. And this fact will (sadly) boost your spirits.
If you have the absolute worst space posted, well, you have nowhere to go but up, right? Keep attitudes positive and be careful with comments, if someone is brave and posts, they are just that, brave! Also, please print out your photos and display them prominently in your space. Why? Because, when you're halfway through this challenge at Week #13 and you don't want to do this anymore; when you feel like all you do is organize and nothing has changed, you're going to look at the picture and see how far you've come. And that will give you the boost you need to keep going.
Stacy’s space
Overall, Stacy is happy with her space. She’s able to clear any counter or island clutter quickly and easily because there are designated containers and places for everything. Her space was constructed from the ground up, so she was able to fix problems as she built out the space.

More Insight from Jill
This is a photo of my dreams coming together.

Half-way through the sorting and organizing process I hit a roadblock. I got sick, and it took a long time before I felt good enough to do anything. I was also low on patience with the clutter I couldn’t get to, and fell behind with the challenge. If you look at the photo there is both clutter and organizing going on at the same time on the work surface of my island. On this day I decided to move everything that needed sorting and organizing onto the landing outside of my studio. I also put boxes full of things into a corner of our bedroom. This emergency clean-up was a big mistake, and you’ll learn why next week. I truly thought I could get the whole thing cleaned up in a day, ha! It took months!

During these months I also struggled with new decisions; questioning everything about old and new organizational systems. I wanted my room to be completely organized, full of creativity and have a “flow.” I read a book about Feng Shui to better understand how clutter affects our beings and homes. I studied, and then incorporated simple parts of the practice into my studio. This was just what was needed to stop my doubts, make the space flow, and for me to see how to organize every little thing. The space became comfortable to me, and to others. Feng Shui principles may not be for everyone but they sure helped me. One example, I often left large items on the floor to deal with later (see the photo above). I did this for convenience, but it became clutter. When I cleaned EVERYTHING off of the floor (even things under my island) I felt free, and every nook and cranny I cleaned-up after that brought more freedom.

I was in a meeting with my co-worker, Kelsey Maxon, and she mentioned that some scrapers are “diggers” and others are “separators.” I asked what she meant and she said that she prefers one container for buttons so she can rummage through it to find what she needs; hence, a digger. We talked about the separator (or sorter) who would remove buttons from cards, sort them into groups of color or type, and then place them into individual containers. Grateful for new insight, I looked at my studio and habits and concluded I’m a digger in some of my organization systems, and a separator (or sorter) in others. For example, my embellishments are separated into color-coded bins where I “dig” into them to find what I need (they’re not in one huge bin like a true digger). I like my buttons in separated color-assigned jars.
where I can find them quickly like a sorter. This concept helped me focus on what I usually did when I scrapped, when I brought something home from the store, or when I cleaned up. The work I did on the challenge became more fun with my systems clearly defined. I also found if I over-did my sorting I ended up spending more time sorting than if I dug for something occasionally. In the end, the systems I (and you) implement are the systems we will want to use. No one cares as much as we do about our studios and how we create in them.

**Tip:** Consider the digger, separator, or the combination digger and separator as you approach your systems, and when dreaming about your space. It might reveal new thinking about your scrapbooking preferences that you hadn’t considered before.

As I sorted, I became aware that I had a lot of “collections” that burdened me. I had too many things in some of my centers which made it difficult to remember what I had, let alone to remember to use them. Here’s one example: Gripper punches that punched a small flower, teardrop, oval, pine tree, etc. were popular in the late 90’s. I’ve had a collection of them and realized during sorting that while I felt comfortable knowing I had most of the punches to use if needed, I rarely used all of them (only the circles and rectangle). These punches were some of the first tools I ever owned, and I was emotionally attached to them. They had served me well, but took up prime real estate in my space. I put most of them into a box and gave them away. **What a relief!** After that experience I challenged myself to honestly assess everything in my space and let go of any item or collection that didn’t serve my needs, or was burdensome. It was one of the most liberating things I’ve done for myself (and my studio) in years.

I was tempted during this week to go to the Container Store or Dollar Store and buy containers, bins or storage items to temporarily hold stacks of things I was sorting. Instead, I **saved money by waiting**. I used paper bags from the grocery store to hold stacks of things being organized. They stood upright as I filled them, and then folded down and were all but out of sight when empty--until I needed them for the next area of focus.

**Summary**
A photo of my old space kept me focused on my dream space during the work phases of this challenge. Looking at a before photo as we work can help us focus on what our space is becoming and it can uplift us. Working from a Space Assessment Handout brings solutions for problem areas and can bring feelings of success each time something is checked off. You’ll be amazed how your space will come together, and that you can live, and even be happy though the
chaotic sorting times. *Our “before” photos can be great motivators to help us be vigilant in keeping our organizational systems clutter-free and maintained.*

See you in Week #3 where you’ll make more studio-changing decisions. *It’s going to be fun!*