

“Creating Order Out of Chaos”  
Or  
“Getting Your Stash Together”  
by  
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Why?

- Sanity is usually preferable to insanity
- Time saving
- Space saving
- Personal space—everyone needs and deserves it
- Insurance purposes—***most important!***

When?

- Any time is preferable to never
- Plan for one week, although this is an ongoing lifestyle change.  
The actual process takes less than one week

Where?

- Any place you have stitching supplies

Who?

- You and a significant other/friend  
(To do this by yourself can seem overwhelming and may result in failing to complete the project or not doing it as well as you can with another person’s support.)

How?

- Make a commitment to the change-Plan and schedule the dates. This is the hardest step! Just do it!
- Understand that not just your “stitching area” may be involved.
- To truly organize your “stuff,” you first have to really find out how much you have.
- Decide on your approach. There are several ways to do this.
  - \* The whole house
  - \* Room by room
  - \* Each Closet/drawer

*Surprisingly enough the whole house method is the easiest!*

- The Process (Number of days depend on the amount of stuff/your energy level)

### **Day One** or “Am I insane or what!”

1. Pick a room to be your workroom for this event (the bigger the better). This way your whole house isn't disrupted.
2. Pull **all** of your stitching stuff out—You need to really get a hand on **everything**. Look in every closet, every shelf and drawer. Take a deep breath and relax. You're going to find things you haven't seen in years!
3. Divide “stuff” into similar “purpose” piles. Having large bins, boxes laundry baskets, dishpans, or even grocery bags, etc. help in the process, and let you clean up the area for living purposes at the end of each day. They also keep you from feeling overwhelmed by the size of the project. The sort eventually continues one bin at a time and before you know it you will be done! If you find things you know you don't want, don't add them to the sort, put them in a big box, trash bag etc. You can decide later how to dispose of them, i.e. donate or garbage. Also keep completed projects separate. Don't add them to the sort.

#### Purpose “Piles”:

- Projects
  - New
  - Partially stitched
- Threads (shoe boxes work great to separate DMC, Anchor, NN, etc.)
- Canvas
- Beads
- Pamphlets
- Stretcher Bars, roller bars, Q-snaps etc.
- Table clamps, floor stands, frame weights etc.
- Tools-scissors, needles, laying tools, etc.
- Frames, boxes, other finishing things
- Miscellaneous “stuff”

If you have been working for six hours—Stop! This is enough for a day. Look around and be amazed at how much stuff you have!

### **Day Two** or “But I love everything and I may run out of stuff” Keep going! Status “Piles”

1. Divide each of your *purpose bins* into three “piles”—Keep, Go and Undecided. Don't over think this step. Keep it simple. ***Yes, No or Maybe***. This is also the step that you have to decide. Don't spend a lot of time on this. Divide quickly into the three piles. Your significant other/friend can help you stay on task and play devil's advocate, but you ultimately make the decision of what is important to you. Try to

- remember that we all have a limited life expectancy, and if you haven't touched, thought about or stitched on a project for years—do you still *really* want to do it more than others.
2. Remove the “Go or No” stuff from the room and add it to the stuff you found the first day. Get it out of your workroom.

Congratulations you have now completed a major portion of the project!

### **Day Three and Four or “Making sense of the *Keep and Maybe* Piles”**

1. Look at your “Keep Pile” and know that you have enough there to keep you stitching for years! If you think you still have too much, you can do another quick sort of whatever seems too much, i.e. projects, stretcher bars, etc. You will also be looking at it again when you put it back so you will have an opportunity to downsize again.
2. If you have a significant “maybe pile” this is where you have to get real! Unless you are 10 years old (and none of us are), you have to face your own mortality. Most of us have enough for three or four lifetimes, so look at the “maybe” pile very critically. For some reason you put the project, equipment, or whatever into this pile, so something made you question *really* wanting to keep it. Trust your first reaction and don't keep it unless it jumps out at you and grabs you!
  1. The “Maybe” pile sort should be quick and final. Don't second guess or things will creep back into every nook and cranny you emptied.
  3. Once you have completed this sort you are down to two designations—the “Keep” and “Go or No” piles. Remove the “Go or No” pile from the workroom.
  4. Now look at the “Keep” pile. Can you visualize a closet(s) or space(s) where it would fit and still be easily accessed and maintained? For this step you need to *think outside the box*. Take a look at all spaces/closets in your house. Many times there is a closet that can be dedicated to your stitching supplies. In many of our households this is the guest room closet. What is stored in your guest room closet? Can it be stored somewhere else? Seriously think about changing some old habits. For years the linen closets have become storage for things that we use very infrequently. Store guest linens on the guest beds (sheets and towels) under the pillows, or even make the bed with them. If you have extra bed pillows, put pillowcases (the prettier the better) on the extra pillows and put them on the bed as part of the décor. How many sets of sheets and towels do you have? Most of us have enough for an invasion. Downsize that closet at the same time. Why have closets storing stuff you use infrequently when the things you use frequently have no home? Rethink

- how you use your closets. O.K. got it? Now identify an area for your stitching space and keep it in mind as you start to sort your “keepers.”
5. Spread out your “Keep” bins or boxes all in the workroom. Gather all storage or organizers you have for your stuff. Take one box or bin at a time and decide if the storage or organizers you have will still work or whether you need more or a different type. Think of accessibility while you’re making this decision. If it’s too hard to get to you won’t get to it! (I have inserted some ideas for containers on the next page.)

### Hints and suggestions for storage containers

Because we live in Florida where the cockroach can be king, I recommend using plastic rather than paper storage bins because cockroaches love everything with glue. The clear plastic storage bins also work great because you can see what is in it without having to open it as well as providing some protection in terms of water damage during storms. The other thing I like about plastic storage bins and boxes is that you can label them with address labels and only have to deal with that one when you’re searching. In other words you don’t have to file through multiple things looking for that specific item you’re looking for.

- Under-the-bed plastic storage bins: Great for so many things, but if you have trouble bending only put things in them you wouldn’t use frequently. They are particularly good for stretcher or roller bars, canvas (flat), table clamps or lap stands, future projects.
  - Large plastic storage bins: Consider if shelf space is an issue
  - Tall Kitchen Garbage Can: Great accessible storage for stretcher and roller bars as well as can be used for rolls of canvas
  - Plastic shoeboxes: Solve a myriad of storage problems. Can be used for different specialty threads, beads, Kreinik, as well as stitching tools. Get the ones you can see into.
  - Drawer trays: If you have a lot of drawer space these are invaluable for storing small items
  - Ziploc bags: Come in all different sizes and can keep loose/like items together.
6. O.K. now that you have an idea of what you might need, let’s get down to the nitty gritty of actually sorting the different “purpose piles.” I found this went quicker by watching a *real long* miniseries while I did the sorting.  
Projects:

- New projects:
  - Sort by those that have kits and those that don't
  - Try to rank them in the order you would like to stitch them
- Unfinished projects:
  - Remove stretcher or roller bars unless you will be stitching on the project within the next 10 days. You will be surprised at how much room this will give you.
  - Put in mailer sized box with instructions, threads and rolled canvas or material for storage on a closet shelf, or 1 or 2 gallon Ziploc bag for storage in a large bin.
  - Prioritize by amount of work to be finished. Most of us have several projects that can be completed in less than a week. Commit to getting them done quickly, so they don't continue to take up room.
- Threads:
  - Sort by type, then brand, then size  
Floss→DMC, Anchor, other  
Pearl→DMC-skeins→3 and 5, balls→5, 8, 12  
→Anchor -skeins→3 and 5, balls→5, 8, 12  
Rainbow Gallery Cards—Sort alphabetically, store beautifully on binder rings in a box  
Overdyed threads—Sort by brand

Continue this type of method through all your threads. I found the sorting was made easier by having multiple shoe boxes or drawer trays to sort into.

- Canvas and material
  - Sort by type and count
- Beads: If the beads are still in the Mill Hill Bead packets, they store wonderfully in the 24-compartment box. Another alternative is to store them in the Loran Bead-keepers.
- Pamphlets and Booklets:
  - Group by type: Needlepoint, Hardanger, Cross Stitch, etc. and then alphabetize by author. I actually also broke mine down after type by topic, i.e. Holiday, flowers, baby, general etc.
  - Store in bins, portable file, or filing cabinet
- Stretcher bars, roller bars and Q-snaps etc.
  - Break down stretcher bars and sort by size
  - Sort roller bars by size
  - Sort Q-snaps by size
  - Store in under-the-bed bin, tall kitchen garbage can or a tall basket or umbrella stand

- Table clamps, floor stands, frame weights, lights and magnifiers:
  - You should have gotten your stash down to your “at home” light, magnifier and stand, and a travel or away from home one. Anything more than this is probably something that will just sit taking up space. Think about it!
- Tools-scissors, needles, laying tools, etc.:
  - These don’t take up much room and can easily be sorted by type and place in drawer trays or containers, Ziplocs or within shoeboxes to be stored.
- Frames, boxes, trays, and other finishing items”
  - Place in a bin or box marked “Finishing Hardware”
  - Material for finishing can be marked “Finishing Material”
- Miscellaneous “stuff”: We all have *lots* of this. Use your imagination and ingenuity. Try to get rid of as many shop bags, tissue paper, little empty boxes, and other things you have stuff in order to minimize the space that is necessary for storage. Also figure out how many different canvas stitching bags you really need.

### **Day Five and Six: or “Just shoot me now ‘cause it’s never going to fit”**

Yes it will, and now that everything is sorted, it is time to place it in your stitching area. This will vary from home to home and person to person. All of us have our little quirks and we each need to “fluff our nest” to make it our own. Sometimes though the unbiased eye of a stitching buddy or friend can help you see alternatives to ingrained habits that may need a little modification; so have your friend also help with this especially if they have good spatial awareness skills.

The important thing is to make it simple to get to and *use*. Remember you are experiencing a form of “tough love” and the finished product will be worth it!

### **Day Seven is a day of rest or in our case a day of stitching!**

In the near future make a record of all of your organized stuff for insurance purposes. Photographs are highly recommended. The notebook demonstrated was created by Jennifer Ashley Taylor and is from the web site of Needle Artworks at [www.needleartworks.com](http://www.needleartworks.com). Click on the Thread Inventory System in the Special Features section on the right and down load the pages you select. It is wonderful! and routinely updated. Mill Hill Beads and others also have websites with inventory lists you can print.

**Enjoy  
And  
Happy Stitching!**



**Diane Holman (right) with her stitching  
buddy, Audry Vinarub**