SEWING BOX

This clever storage box is an ideal way for sewers to stash away all their little tools. Special compartments keep needles, spools, bobbins, seam rippers, and measuring tapes organized, and a built-in pincushion adds a plush touch. A book on the subject of sewing is ideal for this project, but any book will do. This box can be used to stash other crafting and stationery tools, as well—think about the tools you use regularly and customize the compartments to suit your needs.

Materials

Hardcover book (ring binder optional)
    Note: If you would like to store spools of thread, you'll need a book at least 2" thick. A ring binder helps create extra compartments but is not necessary to complete the project.

12" x 12" sheet of decorative paper, to line the inside cover (optional)

4' length of 2"-6" wide, ⅛"-thick balsa wood

Acrylic paint (to coordinate with book)

An old sewing pattern, to line the compartments

⅛ yard cotton fabric (to coordinate with book)

Fiberfill

Tools

Craft knife

Cutting mat

White glue and glue brush

Pencil

Metal ruler

Glue gun and glue sticks

Toothpicks

Awl (for books with ring binder only)

Thin yarn and upholstery needle (for books with ring binder only)

Small, flat paintbrush with a ¼" tip

Scissors

Thread in coordinating color and sewing needle

1. Remove Book Block

Using a craft knife and following the instructions on page 13, remove the book block and set aside.

2. Cover Inside of Book (Optional)

I chose not to re-cover the endpapers of the book shown here, as they featured a great photo. If you like, re-cover your endpapers following the instructions on page 15.

3. Measure and Mark Compartments

On the inside back cover of the book, use a ruler and pencil to measure and mark ⅛" from all four edges. This rectangle will be the outer perimeter of the storage box.
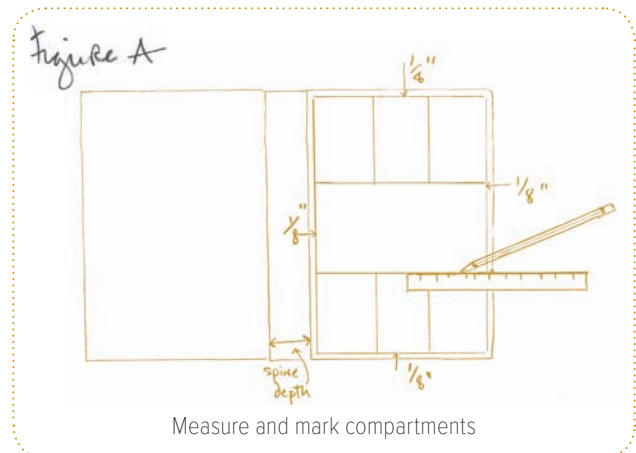
Divide the height of the box into thirds and mark these measurements with pencil. Then divide the upper row and lower rows into thirds, again marking these with pencil (Figure A).
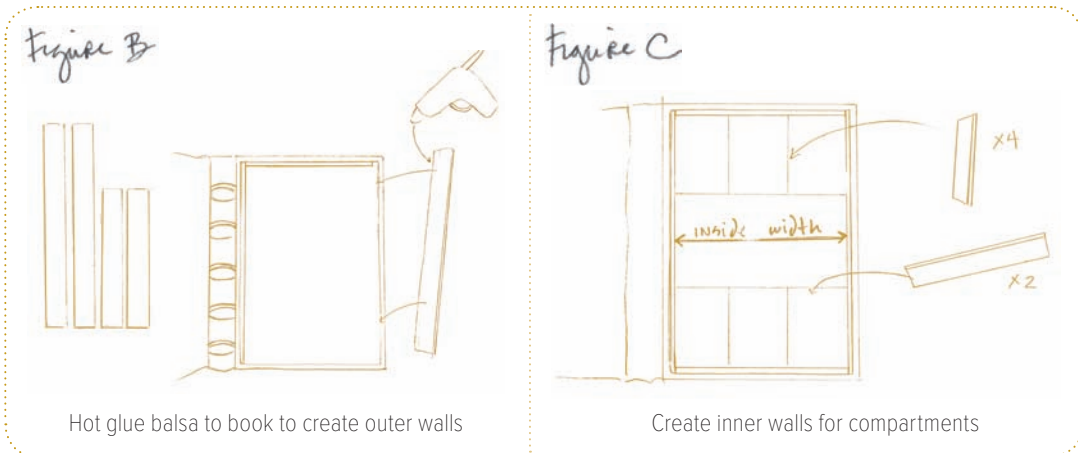
To determine the depth of the "walls," measure the width of the book's spine and subtract ⅛".

4. Create Outer Box

With the craft knife and ruler, cut four strips of balsa: two strips measuring the height of the book by the depth of the "walls"; two strips measuring the width of the book by the depth of the "wall". (Note: If your book has binder rings, extend the width of the walls past the rings to the inside of the spine, so that the rings are also encased within the balsa walls; see photo on page 23.)

Beginning with the left side wall (the one closest to and parallel to the spine), run hot glue along the bottom edge of the balsa strip and press along the pencil line. Hold in place while the glue sets.

Measure and mark compartments

Hot glue balsa to book to create outer walls

Create inner walls for compartments

Glue the other outer walls the same way (Figure B). If the wood fits together too snugly, trim the balsa to fit. To strengthen the corners, add a drop of hot glue and push it into the corners with a toothpick.

For books with binder rings only:

Use an awl to pierce two holes in the wall closest to the binder rings, aligning the holes with the top ring and bottom ring. Thread an upholstery needle with yarn and draw the needle through a hole and around the binder ring three times. Knot the ends of the yarn on the outside of the compartments. Repeat at the other end of the spine. For extra strength, add a drop-let of hot glue over each knot.

5. Assemble Compartments

Measure across the box, from wall to wall. With the craft knife and ruler, cut two strips of balsa wood measuring the box width by the depth of the "walls" (Figure C). Hot glue the balsa strips into place along the pencil lines and allow to set.

Measure the distance between the top of the box and the dividing wall below it; then measure the distance between the bottom of the box and the dividing wall just above it (these should be the same measure-ment). With craft knife and ruler, cut four strips of balsa measuring the length of the compartment by the depth of the "walls" (Figure C). Hot glue each piece in place along the pencil lines and allow to set.

6. Decorate Compartments

Paint the top edges of each compartment using acrylic paint and a small brush. Allow to dry before closing the cover of the book.

Cut four pieces from the sewing pattern paper to cover the exterior walls of the box. Brush glue onto the exterior balsa wall and cover with a coordinating piece of pattern paper, smoothing into place with your fingers. Repeat for all 4 outer walls. Note: If you are using a book with binder rings, you will only cover the top, bottom, and outer walls.

7. Make Pincushion

Measure the dimensions of one of the inner compart-ments. Cut a square of cotton fabric 2 ½ times this size. Fold the fabric into quadrants. Then cut an arc along the two open sides. Open the fabric circle. Leaving a 3" tail and beginning on the right side of the fabric, stitch around the circumference of the circle, about ¼" in from the edge and end at the right side of the fabric. Remove the needle from the thread and pull both thread tails to gather the fabric into a round pouch. Don't cinch completely closed—through a small opening, stuff the pouch with fiberfill, being sure not to make it too dense. Pull the thread tails and knot the ends. Hot glue the cushion into its compartment with the knotted side down.