



Build a Better Toy Box

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What are you going to do with all those new Christmas toys? Here's a great place to put them...and create a family heirloom at the same time. This toy box isn't the kind we remember from *our* childhood - you know, a fairly large, single-compartment chest that we endlessly looked through to find a toy, which was usually on the bottom, which meant unloading everything. You may also remember, quite painfully, what it felt like when the lid dropped down on your fingers or head! This project resolves all of those problems by using dividers and lid-support hardware. It also adds functionality: a seat and a playing surface.

Tools Checklist

- Tape measure and pencil
- 48" continuous hinge
- Framing square
- Hacksaw with metal file
- Two, 2" C-clamps or 4d finishing nails
- Screwdrivers or drill driver bits
- Circular saw or cross-cut handsaw
- Wood plugs (buttons)
- Finishing sander (random-orbit or pad)
- 3 lid supports
- 80-, 120- & 220-grit sandpaper
- Tack cloth
- Four, 24" bar, pipe or quick clamps
- Stain, polyurethane or paint (as desired)
- Rubber mallet
- Finishing brushes, rags & solvent
- Drill/driver & #6 combo pilot bit
- 1" dense foam & 2/3-yard fabric
- Carpenter's glue
- Utility knife or razor
- 2" coarse-thread drywall screws
- Staple gun & 1/4" staples
- 6d finishing nails
- Adhesive-backed Velcro tape

Materials Checklist

- 1 x 12 solid or glued-up pine to yield:
 - 2 pcs. 3/4 x 11-1/4 x 48" (front and back)
 - 2 pcs. 3/4 x 11-1/4 x 13-1/4" (sides)
 - 2 pcs. 3/4 x 10 x 13-1/4" (dividers)
- 1 x 16 solid or glued-up pine to yield:
 - 1 pc. 3/4 x 13-1/4 x 46" (bottom)
 - 3 pcs. 3/4 x 15-1/4 x 15-15/16" (lids)
- 1/4" lauan plywood to yield:
 - 2 pcs. 1/4 x 15 x 15-1/2" (cushion backing)



Tip: Keep Toys in Order

An educator suggests that, as toddlers and young children try to make sense of the world, they develop a strong need for order. So deep toy boxes are not recommended, and suggests that we limit a child's choices by rotating toys from adult storage areas to the toy box.

Step 1. Design the Box

We suggest the following approximate size for your box: 16"W x 48"L x 12"H overall. It will have three compartments, each with its own lid. Plan to cushion the two outside lids but leave the center wood so it can serve as a playing surface. While you can make the box entirely with plywood, particleboard, or other panel goods, those materials all require edging and are generally much heavier than wide pine boards, which our materials list calls for.

Step 2. Cut and Sand the Parts

Using a tape measure, framing square, and pencil, mark the boards for cutting. C-clamp or tack on a wood straightedge to guide your cuts, as they must be straight and square. With all the parts cut, set up and sand them before assembly. Avoid rounding over any corners or edges.

Step 3. Assemble the Box

Using the framing square, lay out the inside of the bottom, front, and back pieces where the sides and dividers will join them. The sides should be recessed 1/4-in. in from the ends and the dividers spaced evenly. Lay the bottom on your workbench atop a 1/2-in. spacer, then stand the front, back, and sides on edge around the bottom, using clamps (front to back) to hold them in place. Put the dividers in place on your layout lines and clamp again. Use a combination pilot bit to bore the pilot, countersink, counterbore and clearance holes simultaneously. Loosen the clamps a bit and remove one front-to-back member at a time so you can put a bead of glue on the ends before replacing it and installing two screws per member (2-in. down from the top and up from the bottom). Tap the bottom out and turn the box over. Reinstall the bottom with glued edges and secure it with 6d finishing nails.

Steps 4 - 6 on back

**Tip: Wipe Off Glue**

Keep a damp sponge handy to wipe off excess glue. It's very important to get it all off if you will be staining.

Step 4. Install the Lids

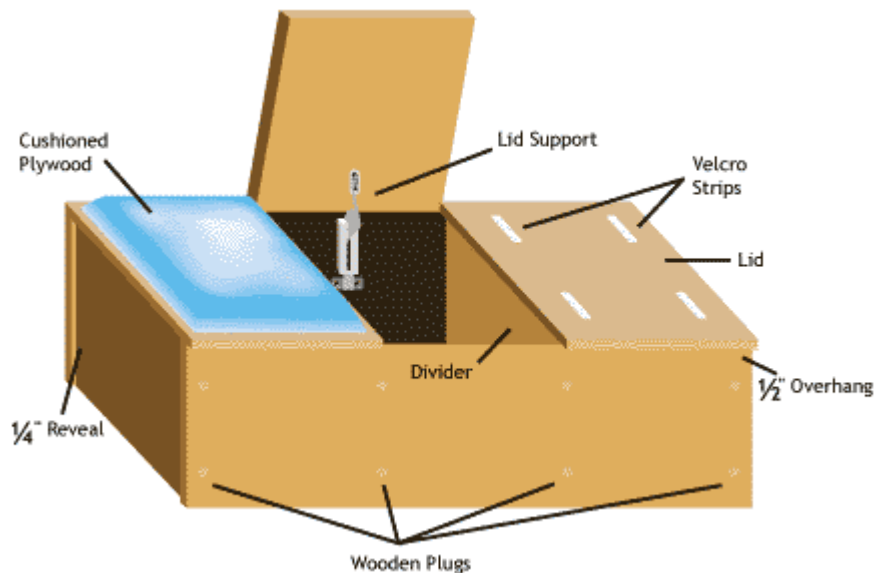
Cut a 1-1/2 x 48" continuous hinge in three equal lengths with a hacksaw and file off any rough edges. Attach one leaf of each hinge to the back of the box and the other half to the back edge of each lid. This will automatically give you a 3/4-in. overhang on the front edge. Sand the entire project again to round over edges and make it splinter-free and baby-bottom smooth. Brush wood plugs with glue and tap them in to conceal the recessed screws. Finally, install support hardware in the center of each lid. It will hold the lid in an open position and prevent it from slamming down accidentally.

Step 5. Finish the Project

Before going on to the final step, finish the project. Clean your work area well. Brush away dust and wipe all surfaces with a tack cloth to remove all dust before applying the finish. Look for neat, easy-to-do decorative ideas. Check out the library for decorative painting techniques such as stamping, sponge painting, combed paint, and more. Adding the child's name to the box is always a nice touch.

Step 6. Make the Seat Cushions

While you're waiting for the final coat to dry, cut the foam to fit over the plywood backer and cut the fabric at least 4 inches larger. Lay the fabric face-down on a clean work surface or floor, then the foam, and finally the plywood. Kneel on the plywood as you fold the fabric onto the backside and staple it in place. Work from the center of opposing sides out a few staples at a time. Staple four strips of adhesive-backed Velcro a couple inches in from each corner of the plywood and in corresponding locations on the two outer lids. When the finish is dry press the cushions onto the lids.

Diagram of Finished Toy Box

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