

My Dressing Area

(Ideas for the 4-H Home Improvement Program)

Every 4-H Club girl and boy needs a convenient dressing center where there is ample space for clothing, accessories, and grooming supplies.

With careful work and planning you can make an attractive dressing center that will help you dress quickly and neatly.

A good dressing area must have a dresser, chest, bench, or stool, depending on the type of dressing unit you use. Good light -- both artificial and natural -- is essential, as well as a mirror properly placed. You may want other accessories like a wastebasket, pictures, and a rug.

Where does the dressing area belong in a room?

Think of groups of furniture in relation to other groups -- the dresser or dressing table placed near the clothes closet for convenience. Try to place the dressing unit where the light will fall on you when you stand before the mirror. You get the best light if you place your dresser between two windows.

Consider also how many persons will live in the room. If two share the room, you may need two mirrors, one over the dressing table and one over the chest of drawers.

Plan carefully and know just what you want before you actually start to work on your dressing area. You'll find many different types of dressing areas to suit a wide range of tastes -- from very simple tailored built-in ones to all-out fluffy dressing tables.

Built-ins

A built-in may be just the answer to your

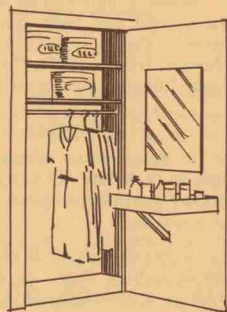
dressing area needs. Built-ins may eliminate clutter by replacing free-standing furniture. They can fill exact needs for greater convenience. They simplify cleaning. Well built, they are handsome, economical additions for small homes and small budgets.

Here are some built in-ideas:

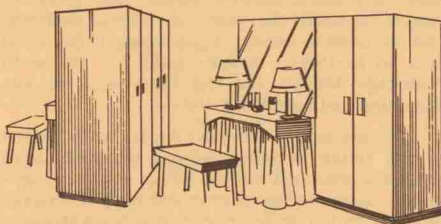
Build in a dressing table by placing a triangular shaped piece of wood in a corner. Add a coat of paint, skirt, and mirror.



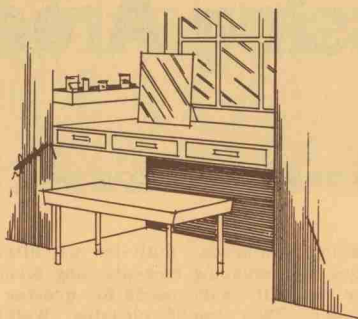
Attach a mirror and a dressing table shelf with a raised edge to the inside of a door.



Make a combination dressing table-closet with closet opening behind the table.



If you have a dormer window in your bedroom, take advantage of the daylight by putting a shelf with drawers in the space.



You'll find you can do much of the building yourself -- and you'll have lots of fun doing it. But, ask Dad or your older brother to help when it comes to some phases of planning and actual building.

Make a built-in as simple or fancy as you want, and use your imagination and original ideas. You have a wide variety of built-ins to choose from. Pick the one that seems just right for your bedroom and you.

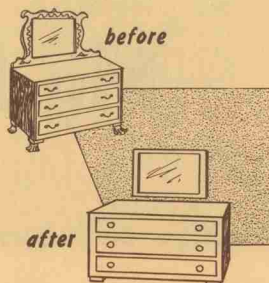
Dresser or Chest

A dresser or chest of drawers near the closet is handy for keeping toilet articles and folded garments. Boys seem to like this type of dresser.

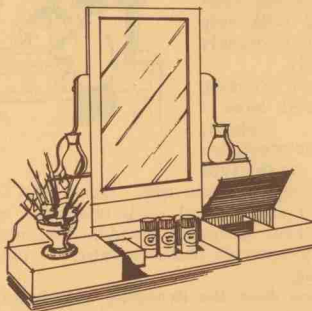
A dresser with three or four drawers is good unless there is a chest of drawers as well as a dressing table.

The dresser or chest you already have may need only to be cleaned and waxed to be serviceable. Or perhaps the outside surface needs to be refinished. If the piece of furniture is made of cherry, walnut, mahogany, or maple, remove the paint or varnish to bring out the natural beauty of the wood. If the wood has no particular beauty, paint it. (Refer to "Storage Ideas" for the Pre-Teen for refinishing and painting.)

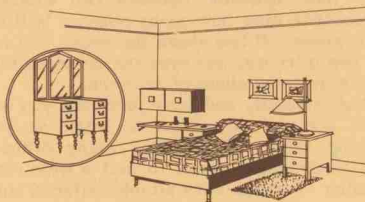
Do any remodeling and repair work before a new finish is added. Some dressers have mirrors attached with a swing arm arrangement. Remove the mirror and hang it separately above the dresser, giving a more streamlined effect.



If the legs of the chest are unattractive, saw them off and finish with casters or broad metal gliders to protect the floor. Or, replace the legs with plain hardwood legs available in various lengths and shapes. Replace old drawer pulls with new wooden or metal knobs.



Modernize an old vanity. An extended top turns half of an old vanity into a modern dressing counter. The other half becomes a bedside table. A hanging cabinet, with mirror inside one of the doors, gives extra space on the wall over the dressing shelf.



Dressing Table With A Skirt

One way to acquire a dressing table is to

buy it. But there's another way. Take something that isn't a dressing table--something you already have in the house or could buy unfinished--and convert it.



Think carefully before spending your time, money, and effort to make a dressing table with a frilled skirt. The ruffled skirt will catch dust. You may tire of it. You may prefer a built-in dressing table or one made from a good piece of furniture.

A good size dressing table is 40 to 42 inches long and 15 to 17 inches wide. The height varies according to your own seating height. This height naturally will change as you grow older. Shapes may be half-round, kidney, rectangular and triangular.

Dress up a round stool with a cushion and ruffle. Make a bench of wooden boxes covered with a pleated skirt. Cut down the back of an old chair to make a dressing table stool.

The skirt of the table determines the type of covering on the stool. Lines and shape of the table should harmonize with the stool's structure. If you plan it that way, the stool or bench may serve as a storage area.

Organdy, eyelet, dotted swiss or other thin materials are best for ruffled skirts. Heavier materials, such as broadcloth, chintz and cotton prints, will give a more tailored appearance. You might carry the style of the skirt over to the bedspread and curtains to give a room the desired "assembled" look.

Any material you use should be washable. Although making a dressing table is a good way to save money and make use of discarded furniture, don't go overboard on economizing. You may find that spending a little more money in the beginning pays dividends in the long run.

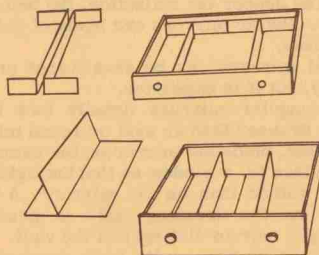
Dresser Drawer Dividers

Dividers, partitions, and trays help sepa-

rate articles in a drawer, keep them in good condition and make them easy to find. Before dividing your dresser drawers, decide what is to go into each drawer. Second, arrange the articles so you can get the most in the drawer and reach everything easily. Since the front of the drawer is easiest to reach, plan to store near the front the articles most often used. Last, make the divisions.

Divided boxes are good for small items--tie clips, bow ties, jewelry, hairpins, comb, and brush. Make from either a large box or lid.

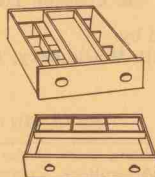
Drawer dividers are good for larger pieces--undergarments, socks, hose, handkerchiefs, sweaters, gloves and mittens.



To make a divider, cut a piece of paper the size of the bottom of the drawer. Measure the space you need for each compartment and mark on the paper. Determine height of the dividers by the articles to be sorted. Cut the dividers according to the measurements of the paper pattern.

A drawer divider may be made from heavy cardboard or wood. Wood dividers should be sanded smooth. Cardboard may be bound with masking tape. To make an attractive finish, paint or varnish, or cover the dividers with wallpaper, colored shelf paper, or a plastic paper with a gummed back.

Your drawer will be easier to clean if the dividers are removable. Small cleats or masking tape will hold dividers in place.



Trays that slide from side to side or from front to back are convenient for deep drawers. These trays usually cover 1/3 to 1/2 of the drawer space.

Use lattice stripping or other narrow wood for the runner on which the tray slides. Use plywood, pressed wood, or other thin wood for the bottom of the tray. Use lattice strips or molding for the slides. Do not use plywood because nails do not hold well at the corners.

Mirrors

A good thick mirror is a worthwhile investment. When buying a mirror check the thickness of the glass by putting your finger on the glass. Notice the depth of the reflection. The deeper the reflection, the better the mirror. Better mirrors are made of polished plate glass.

Good mirrors can be re-silvered professionally, but it is expensive.

Rectangular mirrors usually look better over a dresser than an oval or round mirror. If possible, place the mirror on the same wall as, or close to, a window so that the light falls on you rather than on the mirror. A triple mirror on the dressing table is practical.

Hang a mirror flat against the wall. Hang the mirror by wire on the back, supported by a strong hook. As in hanging pictures, the wire should not show. Hang the mirror to give the best reflection of you.

A full-length mirror in a dressing center is ideal; but one in a central hall can be used by the whole family.

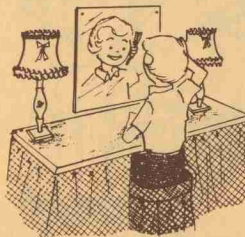
Lighting the Dressing Center

For the most efficient artificial light, place lamps on both sides of the mirror. This provides even lighting on both sides of your face. Lamp shades should be white or pale ivory so that they will not distort the color of your face. If you like color limit it to trim at the top and bottom of the shade.

Shades should be at least 7 inches deep and the bottom diameter should be 9 inches. The center of the shade should be 21 to 22 inches high for the dresser lamps and 15 to

16 inches for the dressing table lamps. If the lamps are too low, use wooden or metal stands to raise them to the right height.

Use a 30-70-100-watt three-light or a 100-watt standard lamp bulb.



Place your lamps 18 inches to the right and left of the center of the mirror and 6 inches out from the back of the dresser.

For the dressing center inside a closet door, install a long tube vertically on the door jams. The light will go on as the door opens, lighting both you and the inside of the closet.

Accessories

Pictures. A colorful picture or group of pictures on each side of your mirror could add color and pleasing design to your dressing unit. Select subjects that are suitable in a bedroom and colors that blend with your color scheme. The size of the pictures should be in scale with the mirror and dresser.

Wastebasket. A wastebasket in the dressing unit is convenient and colorful. You may do over an old one with colors which blend with the room or you may buy one inexpensively.

Rug. You don't need a rug in your dressing unit, but it's nice to have one, if possible. It brightens your room and helps give the dressing unit a complete look. Use one already on hand, buy one of the inexpensive, washable cotton rugs or make one. (Refer to "Hooked Rugs," Miscellaneous Pamphlet 189 and "Braided Rugs," Miscellaneous Pamphlet 188.)

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Published by

THE NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE

North Carolina State of the University of North Carolina at Raleigh and the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperating. State College Station, Raleigh, N. C., George Hyatt, Jr., Director. Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914.

March, 1965

(Revised) C.S. 95