

The Garage Storage Planning Guide

Print this, take it into the garage, and fill it in before you buy anything. Bring it to your consultation and we can price a real layout instead of a guess.

Step 1 · Measure the garage with the cars parked in it

Nominal garage size tells you almost nothing. What matters is the space left over once the vehicles are in their normal spots and the doors open.

Garage width x depth (ft)

Finished ceiling height (in)

Clear wall depth available — left wall (in)

Clear wall depth available — right wall (in)

Clear wall depth available — rear wall (in)

Walking clearance to the house door (in) — aim for 30–36

Car door swing needed (in) — usually 24–30

Highest point of the garage door + opener when fully open (in)

Stud spacing (16 or 24 in o.c.)

Ceiling joist spacing (16 or 24 in o.c.)

Step 2 · Map the fixed obstacles

Mark every one of these on a rough sketch. They decide where storage cannot go.

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Garage door tracks, springs and opener rail

Electrical panel or subpanel (must stay clear and accessible)

Water heater or furnace — keep clearances, never box in, no flammables nearby

Laundry hookups, utility sink, hose bib

EV charger and its conduit path (existing or planned)

Door into the house, and any side or rear door

Windows, vents, and attic access hatch

Before you buy anything

Weight is carried by framing, not by drywall. Every shelf, cabinet and rack should be anchored into studs or ceiling joists with lag or structural screws. Under California Residential Code R302.6, the wall shared with the house needs at least 1/2-inch gypsum board on the garage side, and a ceiling below habitable space needs 5/8-inch Type X — mount through it, never cut it out.

Step 3 • Assign your zones

Give every category one obvious home. Write in what each zone will hold in your garage.

Zone	Best storage type	Where it goes	Yours
Daily / grab-and-go	Open shelving, hooks, small bench	Wall closest to the house door	
Tools & projects	Slatwall or track wall, workbench, drawers	Longest uninterrupted wall	
Seasonal & long-term	Overhead racks, high shelving	Ceiling above the hood, top of rear wall	
Chemicals & yard	Lockable, ventilated cabinet	Away from the water heater and shared wall	
Bulky & wheeled	Vertical hooks, ladder hoists, track	Dead wall behind the open door swing	

Step 4 • Storage height guide

Height from floor	What belongs there
0–30 in	Heavy and dense: tool chests, bulk supplies, chemicals in a locked cabinet. Keep the bottom shelf 3–4 in off the slab.
30–60 in	The golden zone. Everything used weekly, at hand and eye height, no step stool.
60–72 in	Monthly and seasonal items still within easy reach.
72 in and above / overhead	Light and bulky, used once or twice a year. Nothing you cannot lift down safely alone.

Step 5 • Weight and clearance limits

Item	Typical rating or rule
Overhead rack, 4 x 8 ft	600–750 lbs, statically loaded and lagged into wood joists
Overhead rack, 2 x 8 or 4 x 4 ft	300–400 lbs
Overhead rack drop height	Adjustable from roughly 18 to 42 in below the ceiling
Rack bracket span	Must span at least two ceiling joists
Slatwall hook	50–100 lbs per hook, more with rated brackets; panel fastened through drywall into studs
Heavy-gauge steel cabinet shelf	75–200 lbs per shelf
Freestanding steel shelving unit	300–1,000 lbs per unit — anchor tall units back to the wall (seismic)

Ratings are manufacturer figures for correctly installed, evenly distributed static loads. Older Southern California garages often have ceiling framing sized for the ceiling only — verify before loading it.

Step 6 • Bring this to your consultation

☐	Filled-in measurements and obstacle sketch from Steps 1 and 2
☐	Your zone list, and what has to fit that does not fit today
☐	Photos of each wall and the ceiling, taken with the cars parked
☐	Whether the garage is attached or detached
☐	Whether you want storage only, or are considering a garage conversion or addition
☐	Your budget range and target timeline

Ready to design it properly?

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