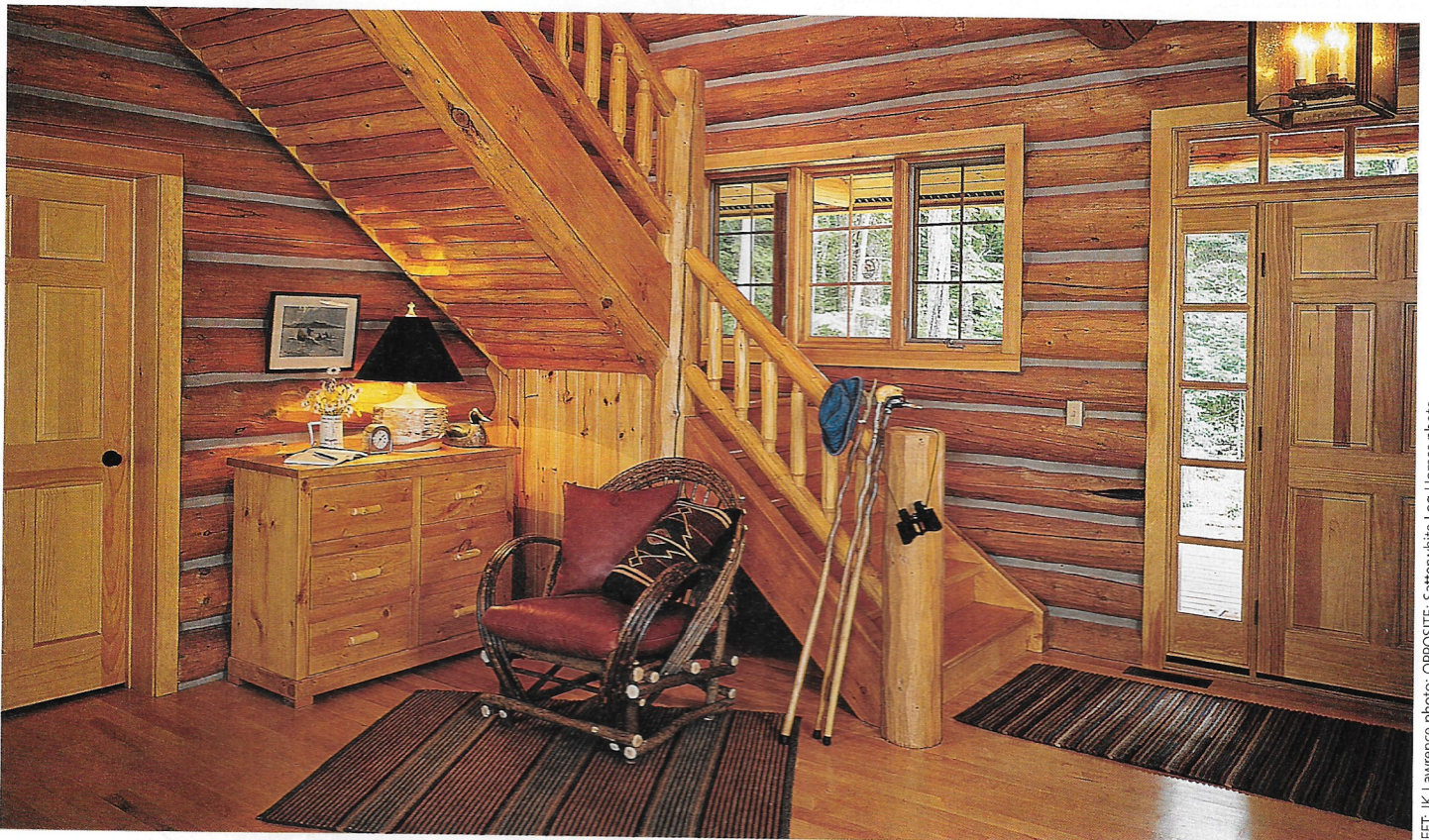


Uncovering Overlooked Storage

When dealing with small spaces, every inch counts.



LEFT: JK Lawrence photo; OPPOSITE: Satterwhite Log Homes photo

Storage can be an issue in any home, but things get particularly tight in small cabins. Even if you've downsized your abode, odds are you have more space than you think. Much more. And you'll be amazed at how much you can fit into those spaces.

All you need is an eye for picking out the storage opportunities most homeowners overlook.

Nooks and Crannies

Take your typical closet, for example. "If you hang a coat in a normal coat closet, usually there's two or three feet at the bot-

tom that's not used," says Steve Kemp of the Atlanta architectural firm Kemp Hall Studio. Capture that space by installing a cabinet or shelving unit.

The space under staircases is another storage goldmine. Add cabinetry or shelving, or carve out space there for a walk-in closet, computer work station or a play space for the kids.

Got a spacious hallway? Give that wasted circulation space more purpose. A little craft desk along one side of the hallway can serve as additional storage while making the area more functional, Kemp says.

Space behind the knee walls in rooms

with sloped ceilings lends itself well to built-in closets or cabinetry. The upper area of the room can be transformed into a loft either for extra storage or as a kid's room. You may not be able to stand up in it, but the kids are sure to love having their own small, adult-free space.

Kitchen Cubbies

In a small kitchen, you can fit shallow drawers into the toekicks beneath your lower cabinetry for storing flat items like placemats, tablecloths and linens. Cabinets built into the base of an eat-at counter can stow away baking pans or dishes. Some cabinet companies even offer back-

LEFT: Look for spaces, like this area below a set of stairs, to add extra storage in a small home.

RIGHT: A built-in cubby turns a knee wall into a functional shelf for toys and books. Cupboards fill the space beneath the window seat.

splashes with interior storage.

“One area to look at is above your stove where the hood typically goes,” says Jonas DiCaprio of Denver-based Design Platform. “If the hood is vented through a cabinet, have your cabinet supplier or finish carpenter build in around that vent to get back some valuable space for spices, oils and other cooking essentials.”

Sometimes stock cabinets don't fit perfectly in a kitchen space, leaving you with a space too small to accommodate a full cabinet. DiCaprio recommends installing a vertical pan rack or cutting board holder in that tall, narrow space.

Banquettes are also a huge space-saver in a kitchen, whether they form a U-shape around a table or are just a bench on one side of the table. “They eliminate the need for additional circulation behind the seating and allow a table to nest into a tight corner of the kitchen,” DiCaprio says. Add a lift-up top on the banquette or drawers that come out from the front for extra storage under the seating. Use the same concept with window seats to nab additional storage space around the house.

“Bathrooms are always tough areas,” says Jeff Balmer of Lands End Development, a custom home builder in Crosslake, Minnesota. Tough, but not impossible.

Capitalize on the space beneath a bench in or outside of the shower with a couple of deep drawers. A tub surround can offer similar storage opportunities beneath the bathtub. Likewise, drawers can be tucked into any steps leading up to the tub.

In a pinch, utilizing the space between the toilet tank and the floor or installing drawers in the toekick space underneath vanities and cabinets can provide some extra space.



Tucked Away

Balmer says he'll occasionally see a pedestal sink with a small piece of furniture next to it for storage. But because bathrooms tend to measure in on the small side, it's best to go easy on the furniture.

That's likely why there's such a strong preference for vanities built around the sink, even in powder rooms. They hold everything from toiletries to extra towels or toilet paper. “The older vanities tended to have a false panel at the top because of the plumbing behind it,” Balmer explains. “A lot of the newer ones will do a couple of small drawers or one big drawer with the back of the drawer cut out in a particular shape to adapt to the plumbing.”

Drawers have also found their way into kitchens. Especially in lower cabinetry, as drawers eliminate the need to open cabinet doors, bend over and strain to see what's tucked in back. They also save on space within the cabinet box, according to DiCaprio.

Another overlooked area is above the refrigerator. A cabinet extending from the top of the fridge to the ceiling is perfect for those infrequently used appliances. Align the cabinet with the depth of the refrigerator as opposed to that of the other cabinets to eke out as many inches as possible.

If you have room for a pantry cabinet in your kitchen, consider stretching it to the ceiling for maximum storage. For a walk-in pantry, DiCaprio recommends carefully spacing your shelving vertically so as not to leave excess space between the top of the items you're storing and the shelf above them. Also consider storing bulky items on the floor below the first row of shelving.

Balmer suggests joggling the wall behind a standard fridge to get the counter-depth look without sacrificing the capacity of a full-depth refrigerator. In the bathroom, the toilet can also be recessed into the wall to reclaim some space and align the depth of the toilet closer to that of the vanity. The same trick also works with the medicine cabinet.

Consider an over-the-toilet cabinet or open storage, like shelves and hanging baskets, for over the toilet. These storage units have a bit more depth than a medicine cabinet and are great for tucking away towels or larger toiletries.

Clearing clutter helps, but there will always be items that need a place to belong. Most houses have pockets of space that often go unnoticed, Kemp says. “It ultimately comes down to looking at every nook and cranny in your home and figuring out how you can use them.” **CBC**