For years, Helen Norman navigated a maze of skis, coolers, boxes, and other items she and her family had allowed to take over the basement in their Maryland home. “We tended to shove things wherever we could,” says Helen. Tired of the muddle, she gave the sports gear the boot and the space purpose. Now she has a well-defined L-shape storage area with a workspace to wrap gifts and prepare packages for her photography business. “It’s an area you would have never thought of as being useful, but it really transformed into something great,” Helen says.

**WORK ZONE** Two steel work tops are mounted at a height that’s ideal whether Helen is standing or sitting. New chrome handles help an old wood file cabinet fit in; stackable paper trays above it use every inch of space.
Spot-On Storage

“You don’t need a lot of space to create vertical storage,” Helen says. Her floor-to-ceiling solutions came in the form of a shelving system from IKEA, chosen for its flexibility and affordability. Adjustable shelves that are 14 inches deep hang on two wall-mounted posts drilled into studs. Helen installed two identical setups for less than $200 apiece. Her legless desks were created using the same system. Other options include slanted shelves and clothes rods.

Broder system, ikea.com

Taking Stock

Matching metal wall units maximize storage space with neat arrangements.

- **CHINA AND GLASSWARE** Quilted protectors for dinnerware are identified by beribboned key tags. Cotton china cases, containerstore.com

- **MAGAZINES** Sturdy, labeled holders protect magazines. Choose storage pieces in neutral colors to ensure a quiet, cohesive scheme. Natural magazine files, containerstore.com

- **CARDS** Each labeled with a sample, metal tins store promotional cards for Helen’s business. Greeting cards or family photos affixed to folded paper also make good storage labels.

- **BULK SUPPLIES** Like grocery store merchandise, rows of pantry items and household goods grouped by category make it easy to check supplies.

- **BOOTS AND SHOES** These easy-to-clean metal trays are actually inexpensive bases for rabbit hutches. These were made to fit under the bottom shelf. Trays, grandviewrabbitry.com

**indoors** GET ORGANIZED
New Duties
Putting old, unusual pieces to work keeps a home office from looking like business as usual.

SUPPLIES PARTY A vintage flower bucket and spool holder atop a rustic bench, top, form an out-in-the-open packaging center.

WEIGHTY ISSUES Placed in a small planter on a just-for-show postal meter, above left, shipping and packing labels can be found post-haste.

ALL TIED UP Storing ribbon spools in a planter, above right, keeps them upright, while threading each trim through the mesh shelf keeps it tangle-free.

For buying information see page 220.