



CD/DVD PARTS CONTAINER



A new twist on the old baby-food jar organizer. By Steve Stofiel

If you're organizationally challenged like me, then you probably have a garage or shop full of tools and parts that are just everywhere. That's how it used to be for me; whenever I needed some tool from my shop for a project around the house, it usually took longer to round up everything I needed than it did to actually do the job.

Sometimes I couldn't find what I needed and had to go buy another at the store; later I would stumble upon what I couldn't find earlier. I knew I had to get organized. But how?

There are many products you can buy to help you get organized, such as storage bins, parts bins, cabinets, shelves, and hanging racks. I had tried bins, but they're more for long-term storage and it's hard to see what's in them.

Then I remembered that when I was a kid my dad had these baby food jars hung under a shelf to hold

MATERIALS AND TOOLS

Empty CD/DVD containers The base has a spindle that holds all the CDs or DVDs; the clear plastic cover snaps onto the base with a twist.

Drill and drill bit

Wood screws

Scrap wood and masking tape (optional)

I used these to make a quick jig for aligning my containers.

nuts, bolts, and other small parts. It was easy to see what was in them and they were always within reach.

A company I worked for provided a CD/DVD duplication service. They had boxes of empty CD/DVD containers they would throw out. I remembered the baby food jars and thought, why not use

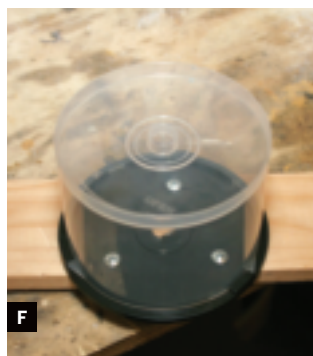


Fig. A: Pop the spindle off the base. Fig. B: Drill mounting holes through the base. Some bases have circular protrusions that are good places to put the mounting holes; 2 or 3 holes spaced evenly around the base ought

to be sufficient. Fig. C: Arrange the bases onto a jig. Figs. D and E: Screw the bases onto the bottom of the shelf. Fig. F: Mount the container, which snaps into place. Fig. G: Because it's clear, you can see what's inside.

these to store nuts, bolts, screws, and odds and ends? So I began collecting them. It took me years to finally implement my idea, but the result has helped me organize and easily find what I'm looking for: nuts and bolts, screws, nails, staples, wire-nuts, and any other small parts that usually end up in a junk drawer.

These containers are pretty easy to install. I hung them underneath some shelving. The 100-pack containers are extra deep to hold lots of parts.

1. Remove the spindle from the base. Most brands just pop off with a little effort (Figure A).

2. Drill holes for the mounting screws. I drilled my holes in the existing circular protrusions for added strength (Figure B).

3. Arrange the bases. I could fit 3 containers per section under my shelves so I built a simple jig to place them all the same distance apart. The slots in the base fit right onto the jig.

Once 3 bases were in the jig, I taped them in (Figure C). Then I could just turn the jig over and put them all in place under the shelf.

4. Screw the bases to the shelf. I used 3 screws per container (even though I drilled 4 holes) and they hold plenty of weight (Figures D and E).

5. Mount the container. The container snaps into place with a twist (Figure F) and you can easily see what's in it. Figure G shows a mounted container full of long screws.

While these CD/DVD parts containers didn't solve all my organizational problems, they were a catalyst and a starting point for me to get organized. I put up pegboard, built shelving, put long-term storage in bins, and recycled or threw out stuff I just didn't need.

I can now say that things have greatly improved, and finding stuff no longer takes up more time than actually doing the project. As an added bonus I even save money because I'm not re-buying things that I couldn't find.

Steve Stofiel is a single father who enjoys home improvement, tending to the farm, woodworking, programming, photo retouching, and 3D rendering. He writes custom software to automate tasks in the graphic arts industry.

Photography by Ed Troxell, and Steve Stofiel (Figure C)