

The 4 Section System for Craft Supply Organization

Why it works:

It's not rocket science, but it is science...the 4 Section System works by helping your brain create patterns for remembering. These patterns are reinforced every time you create something, every time you buy something, and every time you put something away. In fact, they're reinforced every time you even think about using, buying, taking out, and putting away. The system was designed around patterns that you already know and use; alphabets/numbers, themes, the calendar, and colors. Using familiar patterns makes it even easier for your brain to form those patterns, which in turn will make it even easier for you to find what you need.

There are a few very positive side effects to finding what you need – less frustration and more satisfaction with your crafts are just 2 of them.

I think we can all agree that when it comes to organizing our craft supplies, our ultimate goal is to be able to put our hands on the things we need quickly and easily. Along with that goal, I'm sure we can also agree, we want to be able to; put things away easily, add new supplies without too much effort, and use both our supplies and our knowledge as often as possible. All of these are benefits to using the 4 Section System.

How it works:

It's a simple process of grouping your craft supplies together into the 4 Sections:

- Alphabets and Numbers
- Themes A-Z
- The Calendar Year
- The Rainbow

Let's look at each section in a little more detail. (If you would like an online version, please visit <http://www.totally-tiffany.com/meet-the-4-section-system/>)

Section 1 - Alphabets and Numbers

This section includes anything that is Alphanumeric (including punctuation marks), but not theme-specific.

As an example, red sticker letters would be in this section, but red, white, and blue stars-and-stripes-patterned sticker letters most likely will belong in the Calendar Year Section under July/Summer.



There may also be a situation in which you have alphabet stickers that are just a solid color, but they go with a specific collection of themed products.

The image on the left shows an example.

In this situation you would want to keep the coordinating alphabet with the rest of the collection, following the – “keep things together you use together” rule.

Once you have used up the other items in the collection, if you still have alphabet stickers remaining, you can move the remaining letters into your Alpha Section.

Think of the Alpha Section as anything you might need to use to write words, create a title, or do journaling. It might include journaling templates, title templates, etc. These types of templates can easily be slipped into pocket pages to protect the template as well as keep them visible and accessible.

Here’s an example of an Alphabet & Numbers section in a variety of ScrapRack pages:



Section 2 - Themes and Sentiments A-Z

This section includes everything you craft about, organized by theme and/or sentiment. These themes/sentiments should be arranged in alphabetical order. Themes/Sentiments can be very specific or they can be very general. As an example, you may have a section designated for Animals. This would be general. If you wanted to be more specific, you could label sections: Pets, Farm, Zoo, and Forest. Depending on the amount of supplies you have, we would probably suggest that you have Animals as your main section, and then add the smaller categories of Pets, Farm, Zoo and Forest as sub-sections behind the Animals tab.

How to know if you should subdivide

When you’re sorting your supplies, remember that your ultimate goal is to “combine and conquer”! So always “keep things together you would use together.” When deciding to subdivide categories you want to ask yourself, “Are there things in this collection that I might use on other projects?” Sports is an excellent example. A soccer collection might also have a generic-looking title that says “Go Team” or “We’re #1”, and those two titles would fit on any number of sports-themed projects. It would be advisable, then, to have Sports as your main section and then subdivide the individual sports behind the Sports tab.



Here's a few pages from my travel section.



Section 3 - The Calendar Year

This section is where you'll store all of your holiday and seasonal supplies in chronological order.

You may choose to use Spring/ Summer/Fall/Winter labels, individual month labels (Jan-Dec), or even a combination of the two.

In any case, this section will be arranged in your ScrapRack or other organizer in chronological order

There is a temptation to abandon the Calendar Year Section and just use the Themes A-Z Section; putting Fall under "F", Halloween under "H", Thanksgiving under "T", etc. When you're tempted to do this, remember your goal is to "keep things together you would use together." If you spread Fall, Halloween, and Thanksgiving out through the Themes section, there is a good chance you'll miss out on using something from the Fall section on a Thanksgiving project. If you like to attend crafting events, it will be more difficult to pack up everything you need when your seasonal materials are spread through the Themes A-Z Section.



Here's an example of the Fall/Winter section:



Fabulous Four



Perfect Six



Flippin' Storage

Section 4 - The Rainbow

This beautiful section is where you put all of the supplies in your crafting collection that don't fit into one of the first 3 Sections. This section is grouped by COLOR and should include EVERYTHING – rhinestones, beads, eyelets, glitter, paper, flowers, tags, buttons.....

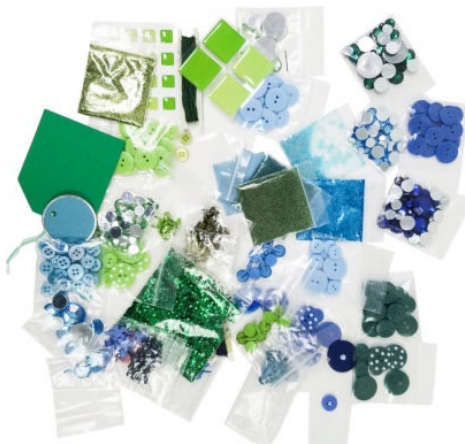
Don't fear the Rainbow!!!! This is the section that most people have difficulty adjusting to. The idea of grouping things together by color rather than by "type" of product can really freak people out. But it's also the one section that people are the happiest with when they convert to using it. Our testimonials page is filled with people who LOVE their Rainbow section!



If you're feeling a little overwhelmed by this idea, take a minute and think about these benefits:

- Once your supplies are organized into the Rainbow, you no longer have to dig and search through multiple small containers looking for the perfect color and size of red brads (or flowers, buttons, eyelets – you can fill in anything here) – you need only to flip to your red section to view all of your options.
- When you're designing a project you can think in terms of "color" rather than "product" – "This card needs a pop of pink." By flipping to the Pink section in your Rainbow, you'll be able to quickly evaluate a number of options and choose the perfect thing to complete your project. Nine out of ten times, it's going to be something you forgot that you had.
- You'll be able to use more "knowledge" because your products are more visible. If you took a class on how to use glass tiles months ago, that knowledge may be buried in your brain, but not something you're thinking about or looking for. Now when you flip to the blue section in your Rainbow and you see the tiles, you'll be inspired to use both the knowledge and the tiles.

When adding small items to your Rainbow, use small zip-closed bags – 2x2", 2x5" or 3x5" sizes all work well. Zip-closed bags are even a great way to add glitter to your Rainbow section. A 2x2" zip-closed bag of glitter can sparkle the world. Keep your big bottles of glitter in a back stock area. When the glitter bag is empty, just refill bag and replace it in your Rainbow. This will also allow you to take lots of glitter with you to an event without having to haul all of the glitter bottles.



Start by sorting embellishments by color.



Put small things like glitter, brads and eyelets into small recloseable, zip style baggies.



Include all of your embellishments, even flowers should be sorted by color.

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