

Setting up a home garage

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Photo by the author.

[Editor's Note: Richard's column on setting up a home garage, which previously ran in the [August 2005 issue of Hemmings Motor News](#) and the [December 2007 issue of Hemmings Sports & Exotic Car](#), includes such good advice, we thought it worth running it yet again.]

Setting up a garage for your old car restoration needs is the single-most important phase of your car's restoration, because without a properly equipped shop, you will not be able to rebuild your old car, truck or motorcycle in a timely, correct and safe manner.

Having a well-equipped garage makes restoring old cars a far more enjoyable experience; in fact, too enjoyable at times, as in several instances, I have found myself working in my garage way too late at night when, instead, I should have been in bed sleeping.

The most important item needed is electricity. If your garage is not already wired, run as much power as possible, as you can never have too many amps. Using a licensed electrician, have a panel box installed so you will be able to have several dedicated circuits with their own circuit breakers. These dedicated circuits should include one for the air compressor and one for the ceiling-mounted gas heater (if you have one). I hardwired my 60-gallon air compressor to a 220 line, as it uses less amps than if it were wired to a 110 circuit.

Continuing with the electrical system, you can never have too many outlets. Install outlets on both sides of your workstations, on both sides of the garage doors, and two on the wall opposite the workstations, in order to cut down on the use of dangerous extension cords. One of the most useful electrical items is a ceiling fan right in the middle of the garage; in the winter, this fan will help distribute the heat throughout the space more efficiently, while making it cooler when the temperature outside rises.

A large vise is a necessity. I prefer one with six-inch jaws, so it will provide all the clamping area I will ever need. Above my workbench, I installed a metal cabinet where I keep all my spray lubricants, oils and grease containers, so they are within reach when I'm assembling my engines. A four-foot-long fluorescent fixture hangs above to provide suitable lighting. Remember, good lighting reduces eye strain, which, in turn, increases the quality of your work.

Grinding and polishing are two tasks that sometimes go hand in hand. So, I bolted my bench grinder at the end of one workstation and located my buffer immediately to the right of it, which I mounted on a steel pedestal. It's convenient to locate certain tools such as these next to each other as it aids in your productivity.

I keep a portable 30-inch-square fan on hand, which I place in the window whenever I'm painting and sanding and grinding. You'd be surprised at how much overspray and sanding dust a window fan removes from the air, thus making your space safer to work in.

Most importantly, a 10-pound fire extinguisher is a must. In fact, two at both ends of the garage would offer even better protection. Also, have a bucket of sand and a large jug of water at the ready for those times when a fire extinguisher would be overkill. I also keep a metal garbage pail—with its lid on—inside my garage to stash dirty rags, and I have a fireproof steel cabinet where I store all my paints, thinners, aerosol spray cans and every other flammable product. When it comes to protecting your garage against fire, you can never be too cautious.

And don't forget to protect yourself as well. Safety goggles and safety glasses, several pairs of work gloves, dust masks and an OSHA-approved dual-cartridge mask for

painting are essential. After all, what good would it do to restore a car if you won't be around long enough to drive it, or see it.