

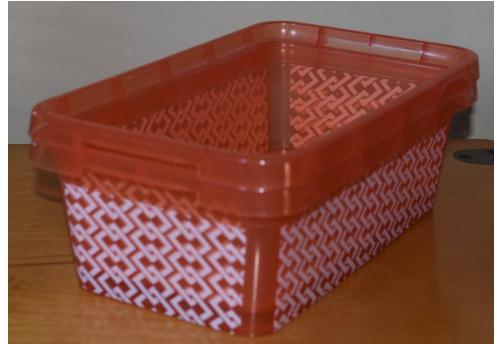
(Almost) Free Parts Bins

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Like all crafters and sewists, I have a lot of small parts to keep corralled, so I frequently have need of small containers and bins.

Of course, you can purchase plastic containers like these, and they're okay . . . but I find that I prefer straight-sided containers, which make more efficient use of my shelf space and fit better into drawers.



Recently I've been using sturdy cardboard bins for organizing small parts in my sewing loft. They're almost free, and better yet, they keep some of the waste out of local landfills.



The bins are a useful size, measuring just over 5" wide by just under 8" long, with a height of approximately 3". They're also very sturdy, and as long as they don't get wet, they'll last for years.

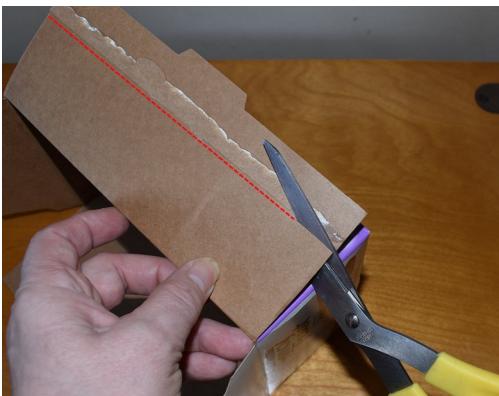
All they cost me is some glue, some gummed paper tape, and a bit of time.

When finished, the bins are quite plain in appearance, but if you wanted something prettier, they could be given a coat of spray paint, or a covering of fabric or pretty wrapping paper; you can even add a metal label holder if you like.



The finished bins don't readily reveal the secret of their humble origins. I made these ones from the boxes that our cat food comes in. Since the tins of cat food are quite heavy, the boxes are made of quite stout cardboard that when doubled makes a strong container.

I start by trimming the flap just above where the line of hot glue is, so that I get an even edge. Once that's done, I fold all four flaps to the outside of the box and glue them down, making sure to spread the glue all the way to the edges, and burnishing with a bone folder.



When the flaps have been glued in place, I cut two pieces of cereal box cardboard sized to fit the bottom of the box inside and outside.





Once the cardboard pieces are glued to inside and outside bottom of the box, I burnish with a bone folder to ensure they are stuck down.

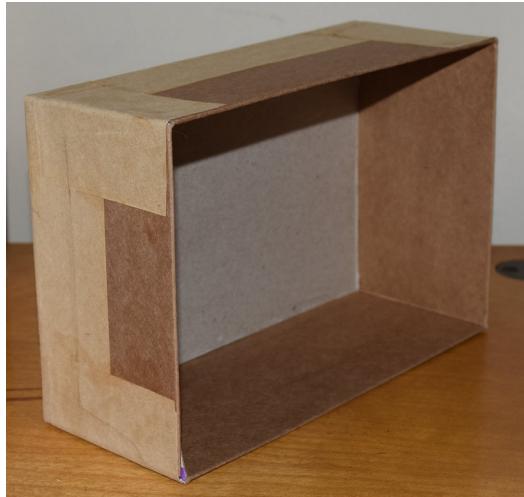
The extra cardboard layers make a very solid box with a smooth inside, and cover the text on the box bottom.

Once the cardboard liners are in place, I wrap the lower outside edges of the box with gummed paper tape, dampened with a paintbrush dipped in water. This tape, made of paper and coated with water-activated glue, is available from the packaging department of your local stationers, and is best for box-making.



Cut your lengths of tape to fit across the ends and sides, and around the four corners.

Dampen the tape with a bit of water on a paint brush -- don't soak it, but wet it only enough to activate the glue. Wait a minute for the glue to liquify, then apply the tape over the edge and press it into place. Burnish using a bone folder or ruler to ensure it's stuck down.





I've left my bins quite plain because I kind of like the utilitarian look, but if you like, you can spray paint the bins, or attach some pretty paper or fabric using spray glue. I've been making these for the past year and have about two dozen or so.

I find them useful for corralling thread, embroidery disks, machine feet, and bobbins, plus lots of other parts I need frequently, and they help to keep my room neat.

Additional notes:

I generally use Aileen's tacky glue for sticking down the box flaps, and it works fine. I recently had luck with a Premium Craft Glue from the Dollar Tree, and I liked it very much – it had a quick grab and doesn't seem to be as "wet" as the tacky glue, so there's less risk of distorting the box when it's applied. Unfortunately, when I returned to the Dollar Tree, this glue was no longer on offer. They had a different one that looked to be the same brand, but I'm not sure if it would work the same way, so I guess it's back to the Aleene's for the time being.

As to the paper tape, which is available from the shipping section of your local stationers: Do NOT be tempted to use any other kind of tape. Sticky tapes such as masking or duct tapes will eventually fail: the glue migrates from beneath the tape, leaving a sticky mess, or else dries up, so that the box doesn't hold together. If you have properly activated the glue, this tape is permanent when dry, and the bins will last for years – as long as they don't get wet.