

Organizing and Packing for a Crop: A Peek Inside Rockesters Crop Tote (December 2004) by Rockester, Scrapbook Organization Editor

One of the most difficult challenges we face is what to pack for a cropping party. Crops are times for us to get together with others who share the hobby and get some pages done. We socialize and create and gab and snack. Crops are one of the best parts of scrapbooking. We get to enjoy our hobby and our friends at the same time. What fun!

The dilemma is packing for a crop. How will you know what to bring and what to leave home? You do NOT want to pack everything you own. You'd be shuffling supplies all night and your friends would be giving you dirty looks for hogging all the table and floor space! You want to stay focused and organized. You want to travel as light as possible. How can we do it? Here's help!

When I want to get a lot done at a crop, I pre-pack and I preplan. Crops usually cost something so I feel I want to really use my time wisely. The few minutes it takes to think before I go pays me dividends later tenfold in finished pages!

What do I take along? And why? Take a peek inside my scrapbooking tote for some great tips. I have been cropping for over 10 years and traveling to crops every week of that time. I think I have this down to a science through trial and error! So let me help you with some tips I have learned the hard way. You might as well benefit from my mistakes!

Plan Ahead and Streamline:

You may take a bin or a tote or a bag to crops. Whether you use one or the other is not as important as whether you PLAN what goes into your supply tote or bin. Take only what you feel you will truly use.

*Plan to be simple. Pack your bag so that you have favored



tools like cutters and adhesive as well as any special items you need for specific layouts to be done that day. Make page kits. I place the photos, accents, special papers, and journaling together for each layout set in its own page protector in a binder. Placing your page kits in a "To Do" or "In Progress" binder helps you focus on the goals for THIS crop. You can also use a box and stack page kits in it or use an accordion file. Again, what container you choose is not as important as the actual process of PLANNING AHEAD.

*Be Realistic: I take only as many page kits in my binder as I can realistically get done at a crop. If you know you only get one page done an hour, why even take 12 kits to a 3 hour crop? Guesstimate your regular rate of work and plan accordingly. Toss in one or two more kits than you think you'll finish but be reasonable. Streamline what you take along to work on. Your attitude should be realistic, focused and determined! Determine before you go that you will NOT be a perfectionist and that you WILL get pages completed.

*Streamline the Tool Kit: Most of us have way more tools and goodies than will fit in a tote. So we have to pick and choose what to take along. I keep certain tools in my tote all the time. Others I pack only if I am doing a layout that will need them. We will talk about that more in a minute.>

*Be Consistent: Once you are at a crop, you want to quickly find your tools over and over again. In order to find what you brought along, have a system that makes sense to YOU. Learn to put things away and clean up after each layout is finished. I basically store my items for a crop by type in my tote. Paper in a certain place, adhesive here, punches there, and tools in another spot. Be consistent in where you store your items. After a few crops you will the locations of your tools memorized.

Where's the Paper?

I believe strongly in preplanning page kits and JUST taking them to a crop to work on. When I make up page kits I usually add the paper for that layout in the packet. However I do allow myself some flexibility by carrying along some extra paper choices and colors. This system also gives me a place to stash scraps after each layout until I get them home.

I work in 8.5x11 pages almost exclusively. I do have some pattern paper but not a lot. However you can adapt my system here to 12x12 easily. My 12x12 generic patterned paper is stored in the blue paper keeper at the back of the tote. Plain 8.5x11 cardstock is shown here in the plastic-handled box inside my tote. I sort it in rainbow colors and use file folders with tabs for each basic color family. When I need paper of a certain color, I know right where to look in seconds. Scraps go in the front of each folder temporarily.

Tools: Compartmentalize

I keep certain tools in my tote all the time. I rarely take these out. To know where things are at, I compartmentalize my tote. On the left side of my tote I keep adhesives of all types. From vellum tape to double sided tape, Hermafix, 3M sheets, Wonder Tape, metal glue and extra Easy Stick adhesive, it's all here on the left side. Clear pockets on a tote make it easy to see right where your supplies are located.



Tools: Idea Books, Stamp Sets and More

On the front side of my tote I keep my favorite idea book, Becky Higgins Creative Companion. I also keep a laminated timeline guide to my children's ages and grades each year, and several more tools like rubber stamp ABC sets, corner rounder, a small quote book, q-tips for chalking, generic tags, and wire in this flap. On the right side of my tote there is another flap that opens up and this is where I keep all my hand-held punches, a few favorite decorative scissors and my hand held eyelet setter

**Pencil Cases are Great Organizers for Smaller Tools:**

When my plastic paper bin is closed, I store my small tool caddy and pencil boxes along the side. In one pencil case I keep my colored pencils. In another pencil case I keep my Making Memories Rub On ABC's. In a black zipper caddy I keep my little hammer, eyelet setter and mat, stylus, small pliers for wire work, and a sponge clip stick for chalking or inking.

**Basic Tool Caddy:**

I also have a Cropper Hopper flat pack and I take it everywhere! It holds my absolute basics like a 12 Fiskar Trimmer and my little scissors. It also holds Coluzzle cutters, Easy Stick adhesives, black pens, a fine glue pen, red-eye pen, brown chalk, grey chalk, black ink, a pack of mini buttons, two Quote books, extra blades, and Undo.



With my flat pack at my side, I am ready for any scrap emergency! Sometimes I JUST take my flat pack and my page kits and I am good to go!! You don't have to have this brand of caddy but it will help you if you keep all your most-used tools together for efficiency.

Pens:

However I often do like to take my whole tote to a crop. And in the top I keep all my other colored pens. This particular holder came with my tote but if I didn't have one, I would use a large pencil box or plastic hinge-and-lid storage box the size of a small shoebox.



All I add to the top of this tote is my "To Do" Binder. I zip it all inside and off I roll and go!

Have Fun!

You will want to keep your goals focused and your workspace tidy. To get the most possible done at a crop, remember the basic rules of packing up for a scrapbooking party, retreat or convention.

- ✍ Plan ahead and pack page kits.
- ✍ Be realistic: you don't need to bring everything with you. And when you scrap, no perfectionism allowed.
- ✍ Streamline your tools: take your basic tool kit and other tools for the specific pages you plan to do.
- ✍ Be Consistent and put tools away after use and put them in the SAME place every time. It will save you effort and time in the long run.

Of course, take a little snack (like chocolate) and a bottle of water for refreshment and HAVE FUN!



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