HOUSEHOLD STORAGE UNITS

ISSUED BY THE SMALL HOMES COUNCIL

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS BULLETIN

VOLUME 30, NUMBER 42, JANUARY, 1953. Published seven times each month by the University of Illinois.

Enterer as second-class matter December 11, 1912, at the post office at Urbana, Illinois, under the Act of August 24, 1912. Office of Publication: 358 Administration Building, Urbana, Illinois.

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STORAGE SPACE SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT AND EFFICIENT

As a result of the trend toward eliminating basements and attics in houses built today, more and better designed storage space for household articles is of extreme importance.

Most houses built in recent years have a coat closet, a linen closet, a clothes closet for each bedroom, and cabinets for kitchen supplies; however, definite provision is not usually made for the great variety of other types of articles that need to be stored. Moreover, the number, size, and arrangement of the closets and cabinets are often determined by the space that happens to be available in the plan. Volume, rather than the specific way these storage places are to be used, is too often the basis for design. This practice results in waste space within storage units and in inadequate storage.

As houses become more compact, there is need for 1) a sufficient amount of storage space which can be used efficiently; and 2) storage that is an integral part of the house. By reducing the number of pieces of furniture of the storage-type to a minimum, additional floor space for activities can be provided and the feeling of spaciousness increased. Built-in storage units, which replace chests, dressers, wardrobes, and similar furniture, help to conserve space. These built-in units, of course, must be so located within the house that they offer convenient storage.

This circular is based on a study* of storage requirements for various kinds of household articles which the University of Illinois Department of Home Economics conducted.

The study provides basic facts on measurement, arrangement, and use of storage space as an aid to architects, builders and others interested in designing and building houses. The material differs from usual presentations on storage space in that 1) recommended dimensions for storage units are based on measurements of items stored, and 2) dimensions are, for the most part, based on the 4-inch module in order to achieve construction savings which the use of the modular design principle makes possible.

With the exception of kitchen supplies and, to a lesser degree, clothing, no authenticated list was available of the types and quantities of articles which families in general are likely to store; hence, it was necessary to compile a representative list. The list of articles was classified according to types, each of which might be stored in large enough quantity to justify a separate or complete storage unit.

ACCESSIBILITY, ECONOMY, FLEXIBILITY

In this discussion of storage and storage units, emphasis is placed on:

1. Maximum accessibility of all items stored
2. Efficient use of space for storage
3. Economy in construction of storage units
4. Flexibility in the use of storage units

While all these factors are important, particular stress in this circular is laid on flexibility. Because of the many variables involved in setting up standards for storage, it is impossible to establish iron-clad recommendations. Each family has different types of articles to be stored and different quantities of them. Each has different ideas as to where they want items to be stored. These ideas, furthermore, are not static; they change over a period of years. For efficiency and economy, therefore, storage units should be designed to allow for changing usage and for varying occupancies of different age, interest and income groups. It should be possible for individual families to adjust storage space to meet their own needs.

* A detailed report of the study appears in "Space Design for Household Storage," Helen E. McCullough, University of Illinois Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 557, 1952, 80 pages, $1.25. The report pictures storage units of six depths and also kitchen units. Tables show storage depths needed for all common household articles. Drawings illustrate the use of units in a house plan. Combinations of units for walls between specified rooms are also listed. The report is available from the Agricultural Information Office, Room 110, Memorial Hall, Urbana, Illinois.
ARTICLES TO BE STORED

A series of storage units, which will accommodate the major types of articles stored in a home, are presented in this circular. Included are units for hobbies and other specialized interests as well as units needed in ordinary family living. Probably no home would require all the units pictured. Kitchen utensils and food items are omitted since they are discussed in the Small Homes Council circular, C5.31 — “Cabinet Space for the Kitchen.”

As a basis for establishing storage space requirements, the prospective homeowner should 1) check the items for which he will need storage, and 2) decide where he wants the items to be stored so that they will be most convenient to the point of use.

Type of articles, exclusive of kitchen utensils and food items, that may require storage in sufficient quantity to justify complete storage units no deeper than 24 inches (see page 4) are listed below. They are grouped according to areas where items are usually used.

**Living-Dining Area** (including study)
- Coats
- Books
- Magazines
- Card tables and folding chairs
- Musical instruments
- Business papers (sometimes in bedroom)
- Desk supplies (sometimes in bedroom)
- Radio, record player, records (sometimes in bedroom)
- Table linen (sometimes in kitchen)
- Dinnerware (sometimes in kitchen)

**Sleeping Area**
- Clothing (every bedroom)
- Bedding (bedroom or hall)
- Bathroom supplies (bathroom or hall)
- Toilet articles (bedroom or bathroom)

**Work Area**
- Cleaning equipment and supplies
- Work clothes and children’s play clothes

**No Definite Assignment** (usually determined by family-living habits and floor plan)
- Toys, indoor (Storage space in several rooms is frequently desired.)
- Bed, folding (Study is a good place.)
- Luggage (usually stored in sleeping area since things to be packed are in that area)
- Infants’ equipment
- Sports and hobby equipment
- Sewing equipment

There are other articles which are not usually stored in large enough quantity to justify specially designed storage units — canning utensils, empty food containers, flower containers, gardening supplies and tools, old papers and magazines, paints and painting equipment, out-of-season items such as electric fans and Christmas tree decorations. If the house has no utility or work room but has a basement, these supplies are usually stored there — or in the garage. Storage space should be provided in the garage for the lawnmower, garden hose, bicycle, and other large items used out-of-doors.
STORAGE UNITS

The storage units shown on the following pages are of dimensions and designs that make the most economical use of space, and yet permit articles stored to be "easy to see, easy to reach, and easy to grasp."

The units are as shallow as practical so that articles can be stored without necessitating the moving of one article to reach another. Unnecessary margins in front of and above articles are eliminated in order to keep unused space to a minimum.

**Shelves:** Because the types of articles, as well as the number, vary with different families, flexibility is of extreme importance. For this reason, adjustable shelves are recommended for the units.

The height of the tallest articles to be stored sets the distance between the floor of the unit and the first shelf, for the space between shelves, and for the height of drawers. Articles of similar height are usually stored on one shelf, in one drawer, or in one compartment.

**Full-access Fronts:** For accessibility, closets have a full-front opening. The conventional door-in-a-wall closet limits the access to the storage space because the side and the space near the ceiling are blocked by the jamb and the head of the door.

**Doors:** Various kinds of doors can be used on full-front closet openings: sliding, folding (accordion-type) or hinged doors.

Sliding or folding doors are desirable when the space in front of the closet is less than the space required for the swing of the door, or where there might be a conflict of two doors. Allowance must be made for the depth required for stacking folding doors or by-passing the sliding doors.

If storage racks for accessories are to be used on the inside of the door, a hinged door is necessary.

**Drawers:** For good storage, drawers should be as shallow as possible for the type of article to be stored.

**Dimensions**

**Depth** (front to back): Depth is the governing dimension of the units since it depends upon the type of article and is not influenced by quantity; the width and height of the unit can be varied in accordance with the quantity of items to be stored.

The article having the greatest depth when stored in its assigned unit determined the depth of the unit. This dimension was limited to 24 inches since 1) most every article in a home can be stored within this depth, and 2) storage walls are seldom practical if units exceed 24 inches. Any oversized article can usually be stored in the garage, basement or utility room. For some supplies, more than one depth is suitable. For example, cleaning equipment can be stored in units 24 x 24 inches or 16 x 36 inches — the latter is better because articles are more accessible.

**Width** (side to side): Width of the storage units is variable to allow for the many types and variations in number of articles among families.

Widths were determined in some instances by the width of the largest article to be stored in a particular unit; in others, by the number of articles to be stored.

**Height:** The over-all heights of the units may be altered as desired. They may be adapted to door or window levels, or they can be made free-standing.
or of ceiling height. When height is cut, width may need to be increased proportionally.

Seven feet is the maximum height recommended for storage of articles in frequent use. This measurement permits a shelf to be placed 72 inches above the floor, thus being within the reach of a woman of average height.

In most houses, many of the units can be of floor-to-ceiling height, and the space above easy reach can be used for articles not in frequent use.

**Modular Dimensions:** All dimensions in this study have been adjusted to a 4-inch module — that is, 4 inches is used as the basic unit of measurement. By having the dimensions of both units and building materials divisible by 4 inches, it is possible to achieve economy in construction as less cutting and fitting of material are required.

## Units Standardized to Three Depths

The storage units on the following pages are grouped according to depth since that is the governing dimension.

Only three depths are presented — 12-inch, 16-inch and 24-inch. Practically all items considered in this publication can be stored efficiently (with maximum accessibility and economy of space use) in units of these depths.

By standardizing the units to three depths, it is possible to simplify construction and, consequently, to reduce costs. Standardizing the depths also makes possible flexibility of use as is apparent in the way the units are presented on the following pages.

Dimensions on the photographs are for the particular models shown. All full-height units are 84 inches tall; however, they may be ceiling height.

Depths, widths, and heights given for the units are nominal inside dimensions. During construction, it may be necessary to deviate slightly from the stated dimensions for purposes of economy and ease of construction — *i.e.*, a 12-inch book shelf will probably be built using a 1 x 12 board which is actually 11 1/2 inches wide.

## STORAGE WALLS

The basic storage units can be combined in many ways to form partitions between rooms. They can be assembled so the units are:

1. **Side by side.** Units placed beside each other can open into the same room or into adjacent rooms. Such units should be of the same depth.

2. **Back to back.** Units placed this way can serve adjacent rooms.

3. **Stacked.** When two types of related storage require less than full height of the wall, they may be placed one above the other. A bedding unit, for example, may be placed above a luggage unit.

All of the above assemblies may be used in combination if the over-all depth of the storage wall is constant.

The use of storage units as room dividers is advantageous in houses which, through the use of roof trusses or other methods of framing, place the load of the roof on the exterior walls, thus relieving the interior partitions of all structural weight. This type of construction is gaining in importance since it 1) reduces labor and material costs, and 2) allows great flexibility in the use of floor space and in arrangement of rooms within the house. This flexibility can be increased by the use of the storage units described here since units of the same depth can be utilized for several types of storage.
UNITS — 12 INCHES DEEP

DINNERWARE

Because of numerous identical pieces of dinnerware, shelves 12 inches deep* meet the principle of functional storage (visible and accessible). Dinner plates (10½" in diameter) are the largest pieces generally included in sets. Large chop plates, platters and trays can be accommodated within the 12-inch depth if slanting shelves are used.

The full-height unit pictured here holds a complete service of china and glassware for 12 people, plus other service and decorative pieces that bring the number of items to 165. The unit at the left provides service for 12 without the platters and trays.

Only identical items should be placed one in front of each other — i.e., cups, glasses. Only items identical in size, as well as type, should be stacked — i.e., dinner plates, salad plates, or bowls. Lineal feet of shelving required when items are so stored:

- Service for 4 — 6 feet
- Service for 6 — 9 feet
- Service for 8 — 12 feet
- Service for 12 — 18 feet

Nine or 12 items of glassware can be accommodated in one lineal foot of shelving if items are stored three deep.

Shelves: Shelves should be adjustable with only enough margin above the stacks to permit easy removal of items. Top shelf for items in frequent use should not be higher than 72 inches above the floor.

Width of unit: At least 20 inches for economical use of space.

Height of unit: Variable.

* Dinnerware may also be economically stored on 12-inch shelves recessed in units 24 inches deep. Such a unit is a practical combination since table linens can be stored in the lower section. The 24-inch drawers provide a convenient 12-inch counter for use when dishes are being placed on, or removed from, the shelves.
BOOKS

A 12-inch depth is ample since it will take care of unusually large books. From the standpoint of economical use of space only, a 10-inch depth would be sufficient for most books. Economy of construction and flexibility of use, however, justify the extension of this depth to 12 inches.

Shelves: Miscellaneous books average 9 books to one foot of shelf space. A ¾-inch space above a book is enough margin for easy handling.

Height and width of unit: Depend on number of books, space available, proportions of unit, and the way unit relates to rest of room.

MAGAZINES

Most magazines are less than 12 inches wide. They can be stored 1) vertically, 2) in stacks, or 3) in tiers.

Depth of units for magazines which are:
- Piled in stacks — 12 inches
- Stored vertically — 12 inches
- Stored in tiers — 4, 8, or 12 inches. (A depth of approximately 2 inches should be allowed for each tier.) Economy of construction and flexibility of use make the 12-inch depth preferable.

Width of unit: At least 24 inches so magazines can be easily seen.

Height of unit: Variable.

TOYS

Most toys for indoor play can be stored on shelves 12 inches deep. (Oversized toys can be put in the storage unit for infants' equipment if one is provided. Large outdoor play equipment should be stored in garage or basement.)

This unit is designed with tip-out bins which are easy to open and shut; moreover, they are permanently attached to the unit.

Height of unit: If height is kept to 48 inches, all shelves will be within reach of small children.

Width of unit: 32 to 48 inches.
BUSINESS PAPERS

Depth of the unit for business papers depends on whether or not drawer-type files are used. The unit shown here is designed for a 16-inch (front to back) metal file.

Width of unit: Width of most standard drawer-type metal files is approximately 15 inches. Inside width of unit must be slightly larger than width of file.

Height of unit: Variable.

DESK SUPPLIES

The desk unit provides both a writing surface and storage space. Either shelves or drawers can be used below the writing surface. Over-all depth of writing surface should be at least 16 inches.

Width of unit: At least 32 inches — 36 inches preferred.

Height of unit: At least 42 inches.

Dimensions for drop writing-shelf only:

- Depth: At least 12 inches — 14 inches preferred — plus depth of unit.
- Height: 28 inches recommended as most comfortable (30 inches, maximum).

RADIO, RECORD-PLAYER*

Dimensions for this radio and record-player unit are 16 inches deep and 36 inches wide. The height of unit is variable, being governed by album storage. Large record albums require a height of 14 inches, including space above albums. The radio and record-player compartment should be at least 12 inches high.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

The 16-inch depth of this unit was determined by the base of the music stands (14 inches in diameter).

Adjustable shelves (12 inches deep) are recommended. Height of first shelf depends on height of tallest article stored on base of unit.

Width and height of unit: Depend on number and type of instruments.

BATHROOM SUPPLIES

Depth of this unit was set at 16 inches by size of large bath towels (measuring 8 x 16 inches when folded in thirds) and by foot tub or baby’s bathtub (18 x 14 x 5 inches). If there are small children in family, a compartment with lock is recommended for medicines and lotions.

Width of unit: 24 inches is narrowest width that will accommodate representative quantities of supplies.

Height of unit: Full height.

* Television sets were not included in this study of built-in units because mobility of the set is desired by many people.
WORK AND PLAY CLOTHES

Work clothes and children's play clothes are usually stored on hooks rather than hangers; hence this closet needs to be only 16 inches deep, although a depth of 20 to 24 inches is preferred. Any hangers required in a closet less than 24 inches deep can be hung parallel to the front.

Width of unit: 60 inches for unit 16 inches deep; 48 inches for a unit 20 or 24 inches deep.

A tier of 8-inch shelves for children's caps, mittens and scarves can be placed across one end of unit by widening the unit 8 inches. The shelves should be spaced 8 inches apart.

Height of unit: Full height.

Hooks: Two rows of hooks, 12 inches apart and staggered for accessibility, are placed across back of unit and around the two ends:
- Hooks for children's clothing — 48 inches above floor
- Hooks for adults' clothing — 60 inches above floor
- Hooks for coveralls (at end) — 72 inches above floor

Shelves: Top shelf is 4 inches above hooks. (This is ample clearance.) Removable shelf of slats, 4 inches from floor, provides a ventilated place for damp overshoes, boots and shoes.

SPORTS EQUIPMENT

Because of the number and variety in size of articles, special racks and compartments are arranged within the cabinet designed for sports equipment. Hooks hold small items.

Movie-screen compartment: 65 inches high.

Gun compartment: 48 inches high, 8 inches wide, 8 inches deep. It should be fitted with lock on door as protection for children.

Width of unit: Depends on number and types of articles to be stored.

Height of unit: Full height.

CLEANING EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

Cleaning equipment can be stored in a unit 16 inches deep and 36 inches wide, or one 24 x 24 inches. The 16 x 36 unit is better because articles are more accessible.

One or two shelves may be used, but the top shelf should be within reach of a woman of average height. Shelf height must be ample for tall equipment. Articles which influence the size of the unit, together with their approximate dimensions, are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equipment</th>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>Width</th>
<th>Height</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tank-type vacuum cleaner</td>
<td>8&quot;</td>
<td>23&quot;</td>
<td>10&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upright vacuum cleaner</td>
<td>13&quot;</td>
<td>13&quot;</td>
<td>48&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironing board, folded</td>
<td>5&quot;</td>
<td>15&quot;</td>
<td>63&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>56&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>59&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**UNITS—24 INCHES DEEP**

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**CLOTHING**

This bedroom unit for clothing can also be used, in whole or part, as a coat closet in the living area.

**Depth of unit:** A closet having a clothing rod running parallel with the opening requires an inside dimension of 24 inches.

**Width of unit:** The best width depends on individual needs. An arbitrary recommendation is that 48 inches of rod space be provided for clothes per person.

**Height of unit:** Full height.

**Average rod space per garment:**
- Women's clothing — 2 inches
- Men's clothing — 2½ inches
- Heavy coats — 4 inches

**Height of rod:**
- For adult's clothing, general .......... 64 inches
- For robes and women's evening clothes ......................... 72 inches
- For children's clothing (6 to 12 years) ......................... 48 inches

**Shelf:** A shelf 12 inches deep will accommodate hats, folded garments, shoes, purses. Distance between shelf and rod — 2½ inches.

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**BEDDING**

A storage unit of the dimensions shown here, fitted with 10 removable trays, will hold 14 blankets, quilts and spreads; 1 comforter; 2 pillows; 2 mattress pads; 24 sheets and 36 pillow slips.

Dimensions of these articles (using largest sizes) when folded* are:

- Blankets 20 x 15 inches
- Comforters 18 x 15 inches
- Mattress Pads 14 x 10 inches
- Pillow Slips 8 x 20 inches
- Sheets 23 x 13 inches
- Spreads 23 x 14 inches

Pillows are about 21 x 27 inches.

Top and bottom trays have a usable height of 12 inches each; the 4 shallow trays for sheets and pillow slips, 4 inches; rest of trays, 9 to 10 inches.

Pull-out shelf provides convenient place on which to rest a tray when storing or removing bedding.

**Width of unit:** At least 24 inches.

**Height of unit:** Variable.

* Folded sizes are those commonly used by commercial laundries and dry cleaners.

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**LUGGAGE**

A unit, 48 inches wide, 24 inches deep, and 48 inches high, with two adjustable shelves will accommodate the eight pieces of luggage shown and listed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>Width</th>
<th>Height</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dress trunk*</td>
<td>20”</td>
<td>36”</td>
<td>24”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal locker</td>
<td>15”</td>
<td>27”</td>
<td>9”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man's</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-suiter</td>
<td>18”</td>
<td>24”</td>
<td>8”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-suiter</td>
<td>17”</td>
<td>22”</td>
<td>7”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman's</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pullman case</td>
<td>13”</td>
<td>21”</td>
<td>7”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week-end case (two stored)</td>
<td>12”</td>
<td>21”</td>
<td>7”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train case</td>
<td>9”</td>
<td>12”</td>
<td>5”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A wardrobe trunk 22 x 22 x 40 inches, if stored on its side, may be substituted for the dress trunk.
CARD TABLES AND FOLDING CHAIRS

To keep this unit within the 24-inch depth, card tables are placed parallel with, and facing, the cabinet door. Tables are stored on a hinged rack (fitted with dividers) in front of the chairs. Rack is hinged to the front of left wall and swings out. Tables and chairs vary in size.

**Tables:**
- Tops — 30-35 inches square or in diameter. (Add to this allowance for swing — approximately 1 inch per table.)
- Thickness, folded — 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 inches

**Chairs without arms:**
- Width — 15 to 18 inches
- Height — 36 to 37 inches
- Thickness, folded — 2 to 2 1/2 inches

**Chairs with arms:**
- Width — 24 inches
- Height — 38 inches
- Thickness, folded — 4 inches

**Width of unit:** At least 36 inches in order to accommodate two rows of chairs (wider if chairs are 18 inches or more in width, and table tops larger than 30 inches).

**Height of unit:** 40 inches. (A 2-inch margin above the folded chairs permits easy handling.)

FOLDING BED

This unit designed for a folding bed includes space also for clothing and storage needs of an overnight guest.

A 14-inch space for hanging full-length garments is provided. Bedding and folded garments are taken care of in trays.

**Height of unit:** Full height.

**Width of unit:**
- For 30-inch bed — 48”
- For 39-inch bed — 56”
- For 48-inch bed — 68”
- For 54-inch bed — 72”

**Width of bed compartment:** Two inches greater than bed width.

**Height of bed compartment:** 46 inches.

TABLE LINENS

Kinds and sizes of linens influence the dimensions of this unit. Usual maximum dimensions of common items are:

- **Table mats** — 12 x 18 inches
- **Tablecloths**, large, folded — 13 x 18 inches
- **Napkins**, folded — 6 inches square
- **Table pads**, folded — 13 x 18 inches
- **Doilies, scarfs** — 18 inches in width or diameter

Problem in storing table linens is to prevent their wrinkling. Pull-out shelves, which can be taken to laundry room, and shallow trays and drawers eliminate rehandling after linens are ironed. Suggested heights for these are:

- **Drawers** — 4 to 6 inches
- **Trays**, maximum — 4 inches
- **Distance between pull-out shelves** — 2 inches

**Depth of unit:** Can also be 16 or 20 inches deep.

**Width of unit:** At least 20 inches.

**Height of unit:** Variable.
This storage unit is a motion- and time-saver for the woman who does a great deal of sewing.

The drawer space should be wide enough to house the largest portable sewing machine (one 20½ x 9½ x 14 inches.)

Drawers provide space for fabrics, patterns, trimmings, pieces of cloth, mending. Photograph shows pressing (ironing board, iron, sleeve board) and sewing equipment (including dress form) which the unit will accommodate.

Storage on inside of door is recommended. For this, a hinged door is necessary.

Width of unit: At least 48 inches.

Height of unit: Full height.

Width of drawers: 24 inches.

Width of hanging compartment: At least 24 inches.

SEWING EQUIPMENT

INFANTS' EQUIPMENT

Equipment needed for care and amusement of young children is varied and requires a great deal of space. Many of the objects have to be rolled into place.

Articles that influence the dimensions of this unit, and their approximate dimensions, are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Width</th>
<th>Height</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baby carriage,*</td>
<td>36&quot;</td>
<td>23&quot;</td>
<td>39&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play pen, folded</td>
<td>42&quot;</td>
<td>7&quot;</td>
<td>34&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stroller, large</td>
<td>38&quot;</td>
<td>24&quot;</td>
<td>36&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassinet, medium</td>
<td>33&quot;</td>
<td>18&quot;</td>
<td>12&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tricycle, medium</td>
<td>36&quot;</td>
<td>22&quot;</td>
<td>31&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because families may use infants' equipment for a comparatively short period, this storage space should be readily adaptable to future needs of the families.

* Deluxe models of baby carriages cannot be stored in a 24-inch unit.