

Is your garage strewn with so many tools and parts that you can't find anything without a major search? Is your workbench too covered with "stuff" to be used? Do mice get into anything out in the open? For Sherry and me, the answer to all of these questions was "yes," so we got the rolling workbench and tool cabinet shown at the back of our new garage in the photo below. We like it because it is strong, cost only \$400, and was easy to assemble.

The kit comes in two large (about seven feet long) and heavy boxes, so you will need a pickup truck, or at least a station wagon or SUV with the tailgate open, to carry it home. Two people are needed to move the boxes around.

One person can do most of the assembly work alone, but it takes two people to turn over the partially built cabinet in the middle of the process. The instruction manual is exceptionally well

written, most individual parts have little labels giving part numbers and orientations such as "large drawer left side panel #13-2 Top," and the parts all fit together right the first time, making assembly a pleasure rather than a struggle. (If you have ever tried to assemble Ikea furniture, you know what "struggle" is.) The whole job took me about six hours, most of which were spent putting the drawers together with a lot of machine screws.

How good is the finished product? The drawer sliders are not as smooth as in a Snap-On toolbox, but they are smooth enough and have catches to keep the drawers from opening on their own.



Devices like this are available spanning the spectrum of quality and price from cheap junk to very expensive professional-grade tool cabinets made by companies like Snap-On. The trick for the typical do-it-yourselfer and amateur mechanic is to find something that is inexpensive, sturdy enough to last a lifetime, and mouse-resistant. Sherry recently saw this solid looking "rolling workbench / cabinet" in kit form at the Sam's Club in Charlottesville, so we decided to try it. It is 77 inches long, 20 inches deep, and 37.5 inches high. The top is a finished maple butcher block 1.75 inches thick. The frame is powder-coated steel, and the ends are steel pegboards. The front is stainless steel, which is durable but shows finger smudges. Two of the castor wheels pivot for easy steering and have lockable brakes to keep the cabinet in place. There are three medium drawers plus one tall drawer on the left and eight shallow drawers on the right. Perforated rubber mats line the bottoms of all twelve drawers. Behind the lockable center door is an empty cabinet with one adjustable and removable shelf.

The maple top is quite nice. The whole cabinet is more than strong enough for long-term amateur use. It weighs a lot but is easy to roll around on the large wheels. It appears to be mouse-proof. I look forward to being able to find my torque wrench and tube of anti-seize compound quickly and unmolested by mice the next time I need them.

Finally, we bought a matching maple-top workbench kit from Sam's for \$200. The kit takes two hours to assemble and yields a heavy-duty (1000 pounds load limit) table 72 inches long, 25 inches deep, and 37.5 inches high (the same height as the tool cabinet). The workbench has six legs with adjustable feet for leveling. There is enough space between the legs that you can roll a stool or small tool cabinet under the workbench. This workbench also appears to be a good deal for do-it-yourselfers on a budget.