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Expert's Answer: What's the Best Way to Store Outdoor Gear?

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If you have an outdoor space for entertaining, such as a patio, porch, or deck, it's likely you've amassed a fair amount of outdoor gear for entertaining, such as cushions, candles, and the like. But while this gear may be labeled "outdoor," most of it won't hold up to the elements—and especially not when inclement weather arrives.

So, what's the best way to store this type of outdoor gear?

To get an expert's take on the matter, we asked Chicago-based professional organizer [Amy Trager](#). Here, she outlines the following best practices:

Invest in a Storage Bin or Tub for Textiles



For storing items such as cushions, pillows, and such, Trager recommends adding a [large storage bin](#) to your outdoor space—an ideal place to stash gear that's never used indoors. "Depending on its size, you could also use it to store kids' yard toys and patio umbrellas too," she says.

But if you don't have room for this type of storage container, Trager says a [sturdy plastic tub](#)—typically used as a large ice bucket at outdoor parties—makes for a great patio-cushion receptacle. "When you're not using your cushions or pillows, stack them in the tub and take it indoors," she explains, noting that this is an especially convenient option if you have an out-of-the-way place to store it. "When you're ready to entertain, simply pull out the tub, remove your cushions, and slide the tub under your outdoor dining table or near the edge of your space until you're ready to pack it up again," she says. Or, Trager says, you could even opt for a more decorative container, such as a straw or wicker basket.

But if a storage bin or tub isn't a good solution for your space, Trager recommends stacking cushions on a shelf or on top of a layer of bricks (to keep them off the floor in case of flooding) in your storage shed or garage. "Just be sure to cover them with a tarp or an opened garbage bag to keep out debris," she says.

Keep Plates and Utensils Indoors





Gear you wouldn't want to keep in an outdoor storage bin includes any kind of dishes, utensils, or glasses, Trager says. "Since they're used for eating, you should store these items indoors, preferably in your pantry or kitchen cabinet if you have the room," she says. "But if you don't have kitchen space to spare, consider packing outdoor dining gear in a see-through plastic storage tote to protect it from insects and dust." As a final piece of advice, Trager suggests labeling the tote "summer picnic items" so it's ready to be stowed away when seasons change.

Store Decorative Items in Sight

When storing outdoor décor, Trager cautions sticking it in a cabinet or an unmarked bin. "If the object can stand up on its own, like a lantern or a large pillar candle, leave it out on a shelf so you don't forget about it," she says. "And if you're storing something like string lights or table linens, consider using a see-through plastic tote with a label." As for where to store this gear, Trager recommends keeping it in the space where you store home décor items (a linen closet perhaps?); or, for items that are sturdy enough to handle temperature differences, in your garage or basement.

Take Advantage of Your Grill's Storage Features



If you have a grill, its tools can easily clutter your kitchen. To prevent this, Trager recommends keeping grilling gear where it belongs: on your grill. "Many gas grills have a built-in cabinet that's meant for storing grill-related items," she says. "But if your grill doesn't feature storage, store its gear with the rest of your outdoor dining items—just make sure you get a plastic tote

big enough to accommodate oversized tools."

Now that you're feeling more organized, you're sure to have more energy for what really matters: planning an outdoor party to celebrate summer with friends.

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