

Sanding disc storage

As woodturners, we like to have an edged tool in our hands, with curls flying everywhere; but, almost invariably, we end up with sandpaper. (I used this opening sentence in a past article on non-woven sanding pads, and it seemed a good way to begin again here for this topic.) Unless we learn to make perfect tool cuts like Stuart Batty, we are going to have to do some significant sanding on most pieces. This sanding may be on or off the lathe, with or without the lathe running, and with powered or unpowered sanding implements. We use sandpaper in sheets, rolls, and discs in many grits and from a variety of manufacturers and suppliers. Unless you're highly organized, it can tend to get out of control. Efficient use requires a storage system of some sort. Although it is not financially wise, I tend to use 2-inch discs for many applications, sometimes even when I should be tearing strips off rolls or sheets. To save money, I should buy some rolls and stop doing this, but that's another story. I needed disc storage.

Over the years, I have stored my sanding discs in the labeled plastic bags they came in, with the bags stored, in grit order, in an open cardboard flat. In this way, I could always find what I wanted -- the downside was that I had to open and reclose the sealed plastic bags to retrieve the individual discs. (It is important to keep the bags closed in order to avoid cross contamination when you save a disc for reuse -- and, yes, they can be reused under certain, limited circumstances). This constant opening and closing takes time that I came to loathe spending. As a result, I decided to switch to a storage device in the form of a portable set of plastic drawers. You've all seen these for storing small bits and pieces. I saw some limited examples on a respected sanding materials web site, but these were neither cost effective nor did they meet my needs. I wanted a minimum of 24 drawers, and my requirement was that the drawers should be large enough to hold 2" or 3" discs, preferably even multiple stacks of the former. And I wasn't going to spend a ton of money.



A quick Web search showed me exactly what I wanted and needed -- an inexpensive 24-drawer set with each drawer being 4.25" wide, 5.25" deep, and 2.15" high. The unit is the Akro 10724 24-Drawer Cabinet. It can be purchased from a number of online retailers at a variety of prices -- I got mine from an Amazon marketplace dealer (Ron's) for \$38, including shipping. Since the shipping is typically half the cost of the unit, you may choose to find something like it at a local store and save the shipping cost. This is basically a cheap plastic holder -- don't expect a lot of quality. Some of the drawer pullout stops came broken off. No big deal. I would not use this unit for heavy items, but it is quite satisfactory for sanding discs. It is light and can be carried easily to any desired location for use -- if desired, you can store it in a separate location. I use it to hold discs from several different manufacturers in two different grit series. I store the coarse grits on the bottom so any stray bits won't contaminate my higher, finer grits. Other units are available with larger numbers of smaller drawers. This is a huge improvement in utility; I am now very happy with this setup, and sanding is more fun. Really!

Always use common sense. Things that work in one situation may not work in another. Follow all Safety Rules. If it feels wrong, it probably is; stop and rethink. Your Mileage May Vary