



How to use the space

Guidance on using your space responsibly,
from selected machines and materials
to shared rules and planned activities

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Written by Emma Pareschi (OpenDot Foundation),
Cristina Biella (Opendot Foundation)

Summary

A make-a-thek space is not only defined by its equipment, but by how people use it. In a makerspace within a library, the way users interact with machines, materials, and each other is central to **creating a safe, inclusive, and sustainable environment.**

This document provides guidance on how to use the space effectively, with a focus on **responsible behavior, circular use of materials, and the organization of activities. This document supports both independent users and facilitators** in making the most of the available tools - from sewing machines to digital fabrication technologies.

HOW TO GUIDE

Understand the nature of the space: the make-a-thek makerspace is a shared environment where people come together to learn, experiment, and create. It is not only a place for making, but also an extension of the library itself - a space where knowledge is explored through hands-on practice as much as through books and research.

Because the space is shared and multifaceted, it can be occupied by users who develop their own projects as individuals or in groups but also by structured activities, such as workshops. In both cases users are expected to approach the space with curiosity, a willingness to learn, and a sense of responsibility. Respect for others — their time, their work, and their level of experience — is essential, as is care for the tools and materials that make the space accessible to everyone.

Best practices: behaviour in the space

The make-a-thek space is a **collective environment**, the quality of the experience of the people who use it depends not only on the tools and equipment available, but also on how people interact with one another.

Users are encouraged to respect other people's work, time, and concentration, recognizing that some activities require focus and precision. Sharing tools and machines fairly is equally important, as access to equipment should remain inclusive and balanced for everyone using the space.

The makerspace should also be a place where **asking questions and seeking support feels natural and encouraged**. Users may have very different levels of experience, and fostering a **culture of openness and exchange** helps create a more accessible learning environment. More experienced users can contribute by sharing knowledge informally, while beginners should feel comfortable experimenting without fear of judgment.

Creating a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere is essential. The space should feel collaborative rather than competitive, supporting collective learning and encouraging people to develop skills at their own pace. Trial and error are a natural part of making, and mistakes should be understood as part of the learning process rather than something to avoid or hide.



photo credits: Fab Lab Barcelona - make-a-thek space “L’In[VISIBLE] Espai Maker”

Ultimately, **responsibility within the makerspace is collective**. Every user contributes to shaping the atmosphere of the space through their behavior, their respect for others, and their willingness to participate in maintaining a positive and supportive environment.

Some strategies can be:

- Establish clear and visible shared principles from the beginning, with posters, pictograms, or welcome materials and use accessible and encouraging language instead of restrictive rules
- Normalize experimentation and learning through mistakes, display unfinished prototypes and failed tests and showing iterative processes as part of creativity

Best practices: use of materials and machines

Materials and machines in the make-a-thek space should always be used with care and awareness, as they are shared resources that support the work of the entire community. A responsible approach helps ensure that the space remains functional, sustainable, and accessible to everyone.

When working with materials, users are encouraged to:

- **prioritize reuse and favor reclaimed textiles whenever possible** taking only what is needed and plan ahead can significantly reduce unnecessary waste
- **carefully sort any leftover materials, with reusable scraps placed in the appropriate containers according to the organization system in place.** Respecting this system is essential, as it allows others to easily find and reuse available resources.

The use of machines also requires attention and responsibility. Equipment should only be used by those who have received **proper training or are working under supervision**.

Before starting, it is important to check settings and ensure that the machine is correctly prepared for the task. Instructions and safety guidelines should always be available and followed, and any malfunction or issue should be reported immediately to prevent further problems.

→ for a practical introduction to the machines and their use,
see also the resource  **Machine Tutorials**

To support fair and efficient access to equipment, it is strongly recommended to implement a **machine booking system**. A simple reservation system - whether digital or physical - helps users plan their work, reduces waiting times, and prevents conflicts over machine use.

Booking slots should be clearly defined, with reasonable time limits that allow equitable access for all users. Such systems also help staff monitor usage and ensure that machines are used appropriately and safely.

→ for an easy first tool to organize shared access to machines and activities, see also the resource  **Booking System**

Whether working with a sewing machine or a laser cutter, each piece of equipment should be treated not as a personal tool, but as a shared resource that requires care, respect, and consideration for others.

Quick Self-Check

- ☐ Are instructions and safety guidelines available for each machine?
- ☐ Is a booking system shared to reserve the machines?
- ☐ Is there a way to report and keep track of malfunctioning or broken machines?
- ☐ Are there containers (boxes or drawers) dedicated to collect leftovers or rejected materials?

Maintain order, cleaning, and care

Maintaining order, cleanliness, and care within the make-a-thek can be a **shared responsibility** that supports both the functionality of the space and the wellbeing of its users. Because the makerspace is used collectively, every person contributes to creating an environment that is safe, efficient, and welcoming for others.

Leaving the space in good condition after each activity ensures that tools, machines, and materials remain accessible and usable over time.

After completing a project or an activity like a workshop, users should take a few moments to restore their workstation. Surfaces should be cleared of fabric scraps, paper pieces, threads, packaging, or any leftover materials generated during the activity.

Waste should be disposed of according to the systems provided, while reusable materials and offcuts should be sorted carefully and stored in the appropriate containers for future use. In a space that promotes circularity and reuse, leftover materials are considered valuable resources rather than waste.

Tools and equipment should always be returned to their designated places after use. Maintaining a clear organizational system helps all users work more efficiently and prevents tools from being misplaced or damaged. Machines also require basic care after use. Cleaning sewing machines, removing vinyl residues, organizing screen printing tools, or wiping down shared surfaces are small but essential actions that help preserve equipment quality and improve the experience for the next user.

Users are also encouraged to consider the needs of the people who will use the space after them. Leaving machines reset, ensuring work areas are accessible, and checking that no obstacles or unnecessary clutter remain can make transitions between users much smoother. Reporting technical issues, low supplies, or damaged equipment is equally important, as it allows the space to remain functional and safe for the entire community.

→ for a practical introduction to defining shared use, see also the resources [Managing Expectations and Rules](#) and [Storage systems](#)

A clean and organized makerspace is not only more practical and efficient - it also reflects respect for the shared environment, for the tools and materials provided, and for the community of people who learn, create, and collaborate within the space.

Quick Self-Check

- ☐ Do tools have their designed places that are easily recognisable?
- ☐ Are the best practices and rules of the space clear and shared in the space?

A Make-a-Thek space works best when people understand that using the space is a shared responsibility. Through respectful behavior, thoughtful use of materials and machines, and careful planning of activities, the makerspace becomes a place where creativity, sustainability, and learning come together.