



Set-up guidelines for Temporary Spaces

How to set up and manage flexible or pop-up makerspaces in your library

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Summary

Temporary and pop-up makerspaces allow libraries to experiment with creative formats without permanently redesigning their interiors. A textile-oriented, circularity-focused make-a-thek can be set up flexibly in multipurpose rooms, reading corners, or event spaces - provided that planning, modularity, and responsible material management are carefully considered.

This article outlines key guidelines for setting up and managing flexible or pop-up makerspaces, ensuring they are safe, adaptable, sustainable, and fully integrated into the library environment.

HOW TO GUIDE

A flexible make-a-thek area can activate underused spaces, test new programming formats, and reach new audiences. When thoughtfully designed, a temporary makerspace can transform the library into a dynamic creative environment - even if only for a day.

Define the purpose before setting up

Every temporary makerspace should begin with a clear objective. Is it a workshop series? A pilot initiative? A community event? A thematic activation linked to a book collection?

Unlike permanent spaces, **a pop-up make-a-thek must be time-bound, lightweight in infrastructure, reversible and easy to assemble and dismantle.**

Clarity of purpose helps determine how many machines are needed, what materials to prepare, how much space to allocate and what level of technical supervision is required

Temporary does not mean improvised - it means **intentionally flexible.**

Scenario Planning

Before setting up, define:

- ☐ **Objective of the session:**
- ☐ **Target group:**
- ☐ **Duration:**
- ☐ **Number of participants:**
- ☐ **Machines needed:**
- ☐ **Materials needed:**
- ☐ **Staff supervision required:**
- ☐ **Expected output:**

Choose the right location within the library

A flexible makerspace should be integrated into the library without disrupting its core functions. When selecting the location, you should consider:

- access to electrical outlets
- sufficient circulation space
- visibility for supervision
- noise compatibility
- proximity to temporary storage

Multipurpose rooms, event areas, or reconfigurable reading spaces are ideal. The setup should feel like a natural extension of the library, not an invasion of it.

Minimum spatial requirements

- ☐ **At least 1.2 m circulation between tables**
- ☐ **1 dedicated power outlet per machine**
- ☐ **Clear visual supervision of all stations**
- ☐ **No obstruction of emergency exits**

Build a modular and mobile layout

Flexibility is the foundation of a pop-up space. Flexible furnitures can include foldable or stackable tables. Lightweight chairs and rolling carts for sewing machines or tools will facilitate the setting-up of the area. Removable signage and portable power strips with proper cable management will guarantee a proper use of the area.

The layout should allow:

- quick assembly
- adaptation to different group sizes
- easy reconfiguration between activities
- rapid dismantling

A good pop-up layout can be installed and removed within a short time frame without leaving traces.

Test your layout

Set up the space 30 minutes before the activity and simulate:

- User entry flow
- Machine queue
- Waste collection
- Closing procedure

If bottlenecks appear, adjust before opening.

Scale machine use to the activity

In a textile-oriented make-a-thek flexible or pop-up makerspace, equipment may include sewing machines, a vinyl cutter and a 3D printer. In any case, for a temporary setting it is important to bring only what is necessary and test all machines before the session. Ensure safe distances between workstations and position 3D printers in ventilated and supervised areas.

Short, well-defined projects work best in pop-up environments. Pre-calibrated machines and pre-tested workflows prevent delays and technical interruptions.

Prepare portable and sustainable material systems

Since storage is limited, materials must be carefully selected and curated. Best practices include:

- preparing activity-specific kits
- using labeled, stackable containers
- separating new and reclaimed textiles
- collecting reusable scraps after each session

Sustainability is especially important in temporary formats.

Avoid single-use materials, reduce overproduction, and design activities that minimize waste. After every workshop it is recommended to sort leftovers, store reusable materials properly and document material consumption. **We recommend involving participants in the clean-up of the space at the end of each activity.** This helps transfer practical knowledge and shared responsibility towards tools, materials, and the space itself. It also reinforces the idea that the make-a-thek is a collective learning environment, not only a place where activities are delivered.

Temporary setups should leave behind knowledge - not waste.

Communicate clearly with temporary visual tools

Because the space is not permanent, communication must be visible and immediate. Some communication material can be pretty efficient, such as roll-up banners, removable posters, printed step-by-step instructions and portable boards.

The visual identity should signal a creative zone while remaining coherent with the library's tone. All signage should be easy to remove and should not damage walls or furniture.

Clear communication reduces confusion and supports autonomy.

Plan storage and dismantling from the start

A pop-up makerspace begins with dismantling in mind. Before the first session, the following aspects should be defined:

- where machines will be stored
- who is responsible for packing
- how materials will be inventoried
- what checklist will guide setup and closure

Standardized containers and labeling systems make reinstallation efficient and consistent.

The goal is simple: restore the original library layout quickly and without disruption. Remember to allow time at the end of the session to tidy everything up!

Prioritize safety and supervision

Temporary setups require extra attention to safety. Ensure that:

- cables are secured
- machines are stable
- emergency exits remain accessible
- supervision is adequate

Begin every session with a short safety briefing, specifying how to handle tools and machines. It is important to adapt the technical complexity of activities to participants' experience levels.

A well-managed pop-up makerspace feels safe, organized, and intentional - even if it exists only for a few hours.

A temporary make-a-thek succeeds when the space can be activated quickly, safely dismantled, and reactivated again with improved efficiency.



If you want more suggestion on how to start with a minimum space setting, see also the resource **“make-a-thek in a box. A physical and digital starter kit to start your make-a-thek journey, from communication and space planning to tools and activities.”**