

Organizational Tips for Retreats and All-Day Crops

Do you take everything you own to a crop? Do you spend half your time organizing your gear instead of working on your albums? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you need to get organized!

1. **Pick 3-4 projects to work on.** That way I can switch to something else if I am having "cropper's block." Have a goal in mind. You may not achieve all that you want but at least you have something you are aiming for and a direction in which to guide you in packing.
2. Upload all the photos you still need to be printed and pick up in advance (not the night before the retreat!). As you are locating photos for your projects you may come across memorabilia as well. Pack that with your photos. A coupon sorter is a cheap and compact way to organize photos.
3. Set aside the tools you always use when you crop and those you think you will use for the projects you have planned. If you're worried that you might need something, consider that one of your companions is bound to have the exact punch you need.
4. Double check that you have enough of these basics: adhesive (bring several refills), page protectors, cardstock, favorite ribbon colors and embellishments. If you are in need of any Stampin' Up products, orders need to be placed no later than a week in advance.
5. Empty your scrapbook tote! You will be surprised what things you will find by doing this. Set aside the big stuff like albums, pages and tools. File all the assorted random things that you have tossed in there. Throw out things crumpled beyond use. Vacuum out the bottom of the tote.
6. Clean out your scrap bin. Toss any odd shaped scraps of paper that are smaller than 2 x 2, or use your punches and store them in a plastic zipper bag. Sort scraps by general color families and also by patterned or plain. This is putzy, but pays off in time saved searching endlessly.
7. Select your supplies! You are not going to use those wedding papers for your child's school album, or red and green Christmas papers for a heritage album, right? Set aside those consumables you know you will definitely not be using for the projects. Don't bring every sheet of paper you own.
8. **You do not have to decide exactly what you are using for each page.** You are just eliminating the most obvious. You may find it helpful to put all the supplies for each project in a Craft Keeper or a large Ziploc baggie. As a bonus, when you finish pages, they can go right back into the keeper and travel safely home.
9. Pack everything you need for the crop in your bag(s). If you have followed the steps, collecting your photos, gathering favorite tools and eliminating the supplies you will not be using you will have everything you need! Plus, since you are freshly packing your bag...you will know exactly where everything is! You may even find a better way to store your gear in your bag or be able to condense two bags into one!
10. Narrow down your stamp sets and ink pads by the same token—only bring what you will most likely be using for those four projects. Nothing else! Or, stamp the headlines or background pages in advance, put them in a keeper, and leave the actual stamps at home.
11. If you are feeling really ambitious, look at what is left...and ask yourself: Can I use it? Can someone else use it? Can I toss it? Be brutal! Your back and neck will thank you for not hauling along pounds of worthless paper. Sort remaining stickers, borders, diecuts by theme. File any photos or memorabilia you found in the rubble, or pitch them if you know you honestly won't use them. Throw away any damaged or crumpled products. Once your table is cleared, wipe down all surfaces, take out the trash, and ENJOY a nice clean craft area!