

# MODIFICATIONS - Storage Drawer Units

It's easy enough to jam everything you need for a 4x4 trip into the back of your wagon, but it's not so easy getting something you need out of the jumble – shelves or a set of cargo drawers are the answer.

New 4x4 wagons have become wider and taller in recent years, to make their cargo areas bigger without increasing vehicle lengths and overhangs. The theoretical increase in volume doesn't always translate into useful space, unless you can stack stuff while still allowing you to get at successive layers of freight.

The obvious way to improve access to a stack of packed stuff is to fit compartments into the back of your wagon, so that when you open the cargo area door you're faced with several layers. That way you can drag out something without having to unpack the whole wagon.

How you set up the back of your vehicle will depend on what you do with it when you're not bush-travelling. Let's look at some possibilities.



## Three-row Seating



If your pride and joy spends its town time as a people mover, with the third-row seats in regular use, you'll need a temporary type of storage solution that can be slid into place when you pull out the third-row seats before a 4x4 trip.

If you're handy you can make up a set of open cupboards out of glued and screwed marine-grade plywood that can be attached to your securing points to provide space for storage boxes to slide in and out. An alternative is a set of ready-made, steel cargo drawers that can be lifted into place and secured.

In either case a slide-out fridge track is recommended, so you don't have to reach into the back of the wagon to source a coldie.

## Two-row Seating

If you don't need your cargo space for seating at any time you can fit permanent cupboards or drawers into the cargo area, so pre-trip packing becomes a very simple affair.

As with a temporary cargo area arrangement you have the choice of making up a storage unit or buying a ready-made product.

## One and a Half Row Seating

Many people travel with only one passenger in the second row seats and that frees up part of the second row for storage. This is an ideal situation for a mixed set of cargo drawers, because one of the drawers can be supplied full length, where it occupies second-row seat space on one side of the vehicle, and the other in short form, preserving second-row seat space.

## Front Seats Only

This is the ideal situation for wagon packing, because you can fit a set of full-length drawers that run from the back doors to the back of the front seats. This arrangement maximises drawer space and allows you to load the heavy items in the front of the drawers, so the weight sits inside the 4x4's wheelbase.

## Stowing the Fridge

Fridge placement in the back of a wagon that's using two-row seating is a problem, because you can't stack anything on top of a fridge without risking damage or, worse, restricting access to the beer supply.

One solution we've seen is to mount it up on top of a drawer unit or a cupboard, so that it slides out just under the roof line and have a folding step ladder for access. If your wagon has horizontally-split doors the tailgate is an ideal mounting point for the ladder.

If you're using the front seats only the fridge can be mounted on top of full-length drawer units and you have easy access to the fridge via one of the second row passenger doors.



## Watch the Weight

Roll-out steel drawers are made to handle heavy loads and bush conditions, so they're not light. That weight comes off your vehicle's payload rating, but, on the plus side, you save the weight of storage boxes.

Just because you've got a set of drawers or built-in cupboards doesn't mean you have to fill them up with loads of heavy stuff you don't need. Be selective and always with an eye to your 4x4's gross vehicle mass rating.