

Displaying Your Dolls (About.com)



Your doll display may be the most important part of organizing your collection--it certainly is the most visible. Your doll display can set the tone for an entire room in your house, and its the "face" of your collection that you will most often share with your friends and family

First Things First: Where to Display?

Some collectors are lucky and have an entire room devoted to displaying their collections (often, an unneeded extra bedroom in their home, or a den). Other collectors have to give considerable thought to this question, especially if they are tight for space in their home or apartment. In a smaller home or apartment, dolls can be displayed in small groupings around the home--perhaps a curio cabinet in the living room or bedroom, a few dolls on a shelf or around a small doll-sized table in a guest room, or even dolls placed on a high shelf in a child's room (very high, if you have curious, young children who might want to play with the dolls....).

When selecting the room(s) in your home for doll display, you need to keep various considerations in mind regarding conservation and preservation of your dolls. In general, try to keep your dolls displayed away from direct sunlight, strong artificial light (especially florescent lights and hot lights), and curious pets and children. Dolls should also not be displayed in areas with extreme temperatures--TRY to display your dolls in a temperature controlled room--a basement or attic space without heat and air conditioning is probably not a good choice. Also, cigarette smoke can discolor dolls and give them an odor that cannot be removed easily, so if you have a family member who smokes, TRY to display your dolls in a room off-limits for smoking.

And, of course, dust and dirt will make your dolls dingy over time, and make them attractive to insects, which brings us to the consideration of....

Display Shelving, Supply and Options

Once you have selected the rooms for display of your dolls, you need to decide what sort of shelving/furniture you wish to use for display of your dolls. The cheapest option are open shelves on brackets--the type you can purchase at a hardware store or Home Depot. The downside of this type of shelving is that it doesn't protect the dolls--it allows dust and dirt to get to them. Also, the shelves work better for a modern collection than an antique one. However, the shelves (if white) are relatively unobtrusive on white walls, AND they work well for collectors who don't want to be separated from their dolls by glass. These shelves also work very well for boxed modern Barbie dolls.

An antique collector might want to chose antique furniture for display of their dolls--perhaps an antique curio cabinet or bookshelf. Old barrister bookcases work well for small all-bisques or miniatures. Old shop cabinets made from dark woods also work well for antique doll displays. If you DO use an old wood cabinet for display, make sure you line the shelves with muslin or other fabric, since wood has acidic chemicals which can destroy fabrics.

One way to get large amounts of display for your dolls is to buy shop fixtures! The Barbie, Gene and Tyler dolls displayed at left are displayed in a very large and relatively inexpensive white shop fixture cabinet. Compared to new curio cabinets, new shop cabinets are cheaper and larger--and you can configure the height of each shelf to the height of your dolls. Plus, they tend to have sliding glass doors in the FRONT, which lends much easier access to rearranging your dolls than do cases with back or side entry. To find shop fixtures, check for suppliers in

your local yellow pages.

Tips For Effective Display

Once you have the room and the shelves, you are ready to display your dolls! There are many ways to display dolls effectively, but here are some ideas to get you started:

- Display dolls by size--Barbies with Barbie-sized dolls, Genes with other 15 1/2" fashion dolls.
- Display dolls by type--bebes with babes, poupees with poupees, baby dolls with baby dolls.
- Display dolls by color--dolls in all white here, dolls in bright red there (the first three suggestions can greatly help cut down on visual clutter in a room with a large number of dolls displayed).
- Don't crowd your dolls! If you have the space, don't push your dolls all together. This creates a visual mess, and can actually damage your dolls outfits by crushing fibers.
- If you have room, display your dolls in little scenes or tableaux. If you have antique fashion dolls, display them with appropriate antique furniture made for them. If you have Gene dolls, display them engaged in an activity or using their furniture. Antique dolls can be having a tea party--vintage Barbies can be in a Suzy Goose furniture room. Baby dolls in baby carriages and doll-sized high chairs, etc!
- Display a doll time-line--if you have dolls from many eras, display them according to the time of their manufacture.

Source: <http://collectdolls.about.com/library/weekly/aa011201a.htm>