

Keeping your SketchUp model organized

Keeping your SketchUp model organized is essential using the program in a productive manner. To do this, you can combine things into useful sets that can be named, hidden and locked. After using SketchUp for only a brief period of time, you've probably noticed that things in SketchUp are *sticky*. By making groups and components, you can prevent things from sticking together.

Groups: similar to gluing together some of the geometry of your model. Things that are grouped act like mini-models within your larger model. Grouped geometry doesn't stick to anything.

To group things together, go to the Edit menu > Make Group.

Once you've made a group, you can edit the grouped objects by selecting the group, right clicking and selecting Edit Group from the menu that appears. To finish editing, click outside of the dotted lines which surround your group or right click and select Close Group.

To ungroup objects, select the group, right click and select Explode.

Components: Similar to groups, but these are really useful when your model requires copies of the same thing. Everything that's true about groups is true about components. Components update automatically, so if you've got multiple instances of one component in your model, you can edit any version of it and it will update every copy of that component.

To create a component, go to the Edit menu > Make Component.

To edit a component you've created, selecting the component from within your drawing, right click and select Edit Component from the menu that appears. To finish editing, click outside of the dotted lines which surround your component or right click and select Close Component.

Notice that when you create a component, you are asked to name the component. All created and preset components are stored in folders for ease of use. To access these folders, go to the Window menu > Components. The Components window will pop up, and within that you can browse preset SketchUp components as well as locate your own components that you've created. To find your components, select the pull-down menu below the three tabs Select, Edit, Statistics – the menu will probably have Components selected currently. Your own components are stored in the “In Model” folder. By hovering over the icons in that folder the name of the items will appear. By clicking on one of these components, you can create a new item in your drawing.

Layers: by creating and naming different layers, this tool allows you to easily turn objects on and off for ease of viewing and manipulating.

To use layers, go to the Window menu > Layers

Click the + sign to add layers to your model.

By clicking the – sign in the Layers menu you can delete unnecessary Layers.

Turn Layers on and off by highlighting the name of the Layer in the Layer window and clicking within the circle to the left of the name. This is a great tool for exploring and comparing different schemes in a design.

If it's not open already, you'll need to open the Entity Info window to switch objects between Layers. To do this, go to the Window menu > Entity Info. Notice that when a single object (or group or component) is selected, it's Layer information is displayed within this window. You can adjust this by pulling down the Layer menu and moving objects between layers.

You'll notice that each Layer within the Layer menu has a little square of color next to it. You can temporarily add color to a layer (it won't replace colors and textures you've added permanently) by selecting the Layer Options pull-out menu (click on the right-pointing arrow on the right side of the Layers window). Select or deselect Color by Layer to turn this option on and off.