

# organize today!

Ideas and tips to help you live  
an organized, simpler life at work and home

## Spring 2009

### Organizing Your Home's Small Spaces

Small spaces have the potential for big messes. However, with just a little bit of organizing know-how, you can transform them from disastrous to delightful.

This issue of *Organize Today* will teach you how to organize these smaller home spaces. Begin with your entryway — it sets the tone for the rest of your home! Then, move on to the laundry room, bathroom, and linen closet. These quick and easy projects will make a big difference in the look and functionality of your home. It's the little things that count!

## Engaging entryways



First impressions are important, and your entryway is the first thing to greet you and your guests. It needs to be both functional and inviting, providing a spot

to drop your keys, bags, and coats when you arrive home. But if it's not organized, it's easy for this small space to become cluttered and unused. Follow these tips to create a useful, beautiful entryway.

**DECIDE WHAT SHOULD RESIDE IN THE ENTRYWAY.** Ideally, this should be a spot for coats and other outerwear, umbrellas, daily-used backpacks, purses, briefcases, and totes — anything you need access to as you leave your home.

**EVALUATE YOUR CURRENT STASH OF THESE ITEMS.** Pare down your coat and tote bag collections. Toss broken umbrellas, gloves without mates, and boots that don't fit. Your goal here is to keep only those things you frequently use.

**REMOVE EVERYTHING ELSE.** Don't let your entryway become a catch-all for things you don't know what to do with. (This is *not* the spot for the turkey roasting pan!) Sort, toss or donate things that you really don't need, and assign new spots elsewhere in your home for the must-keeps.

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## Entryway, continued

**MAKE GOOD USE OF YOUR SPACE.** Most entryways have a closet. Reevaluate its set-up. If it has a single rod across the top, could you raise it a bit and add a second rod below, doubling your hanging space? Could shelves be added above the rod or run across the depth of the closet? Could you add a tiered shoe rack on the floor? Maximize every inch of space! While you're at it, invest in sturdy wooden hangers so your coats hang neatly.

**USE CONTAINERS TO CONTAIN CLUTTER.** This not only makes for a neat look, but it will also help you quickly find what you need. Label baskets or boxes on the shelves for out-the-door items, such as umbrellas, mittens, hats, and dog leashes. If, due to space constraints, you must keep other types of items in this closet as well, be sure to categorize and containerize them, labeling as you go.

**CONSIDER SPACE OUTSIDE THE CLOSET.** This is especially necessary if you don't have a closet or if it's very small. For example, a coat rack or set of wall-mounted hooks in the entryway will work wonders if you're short on closet space. Likewise, a pretty urn can hold umbrellas, a bench with storage under the seat can hold outerwear, and a wicker basket on the floor can hold shoes. By simply declaring a "home" and containing these items, you'll instantly take your entryway from messy to marvelous!

**SET UP AN OUT-THE-DOOR LAUNCHING PAD.** Dedicate one basket near the door for items that need to leave the house, such as library books and DVDs to be returned, dry cleaning to be dropped off, and things to be delivered to family or friends.

## Lovely laundry rooms

Do you dread visiting your laundry room? Maybe you'd have more fun sorting your whites if the space was more organized! Here are a few tips for making it a pleasant and inviting atmosphere.

- There's no reason a laundry room has to be dark and dingy. Paint the walls a light, happy color. Make sure to use the maximum-allowed bulb wattage in your light fixtures. Add task lighting, as needed, some inexpensive, framed artwork to the walls, and a clock or timer.
- If you need more storage space, add a couple of rows of shelving above the washer/dryer. Keep laundry necessities — such as detergent, stain removal pens, fabric softener, an iron, starch, and bleach — within easy reach so you can grab and go. Use baskets and boxes (labeled, of course) to hold not-as-frequently used things such as clothespins, old rags, and your pile of missing-a-mate socks. If you prefer hidden storage, install some inexpensive cabinets (available at any home improvement store) on one wall.
- Drying racks are nice if you enjoy line-drying your clothes. There is even a variety of wall-mounted, fold-out options available that will save floor space.
- To make laundry day easier, instruct your family to place whites in a white basket or hamper and darks in a colored basket. You'll never have to sort again! If you dry clean frequently, add a separate basket for that, as well.
- Place clean, folded laundry in color-coded or labeled laundry baskets. Have family members retrieve their baskets from the laundry room, or deliver them to their rooms, so they can put away their own stuff. Many hands make light work!



# Beautiful bathrooms

The bathroom surely gets a workout each day. Get it organized with this easy-to-follow process.

## INVENTORY, SORT, & PURGE

To start your bathroom organizing project, take an inventory of all the items housed there. Sort them into categories, such as medical, hair care, body cleansers, shaving, tooth care, cosmetics, paper products, and cleaning supplies. Once everything is grouped together, you'll see where you have duplicates. (And once organized, you'll avoid over-buying the next time you run out to the store.) Now is also the time to toss expired medications, sunscreens, cosmetics, and anything you no longer use. (Do you really need three curling irons or 15 past-their-prime hand towels? What about the 20 miniature-sized travel shampoos?) Now you have a true vision of your bathroom's current storage needs.

## SET UP STORAGE

Some things are shared items, while others may belong to a specific person. Take into account the available space in your medicine cabinet, vanity drawers, and under-sink storage, as well as in your linen closet. (If you're lucky enough to have one, see tips in the following article!) If you need to add storage, consider installing shelving on a wall or a free-stand-

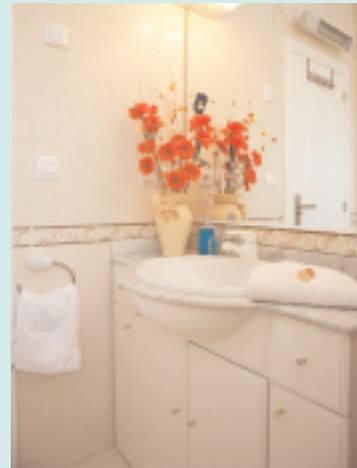
ing cabinet above the toilet. As you place items, group them into their categories, and/or assign a specific place for each member of the household. For example, each person could have one drawer, one basket on the shelf, or one toteable caddy. If you're grouping by category, you could use baskets, bins, or specific areas on your shelves for easy locating. Be sure to label so that everyone knows how to find necessities.

Add hooks behind the door or on the wall so everyone has a place to hang towels. And while you're at it, color code the towels and toothbrushes by family member so there's no "ownership confusion."

If you purchase paper products in bulk, store the excess in an out-of-the-way area, such as the laundry room or hall closet, keeping only a week's worth in the bathroom. Replenish as needed.

## KEEP IT CLEAN AND SAFE

Make sure that the garbage can is easy to access and large enough for at least a couple day's worth of trash. Consider an additional small basket to catch recyclables in the bathroom. Many communities recycle plastics (such as shampoo and body wash bottles) and cardboard (such as toilet paper tubes and the boxes that tooth-



paste, soap, and cosmetics often come in). You'll be surprised how many recyclables you generate!

Keep the bathroom safe for little ones by storing medications and bathroom cleaning products out of their reach. (Many medications lose effectiveness in the bathroom humidity, so consider placing them in another room.)

Finally, remember that counters are easier to clean and look best when uncluttered by oodles of bottles, tubes, and boxes. Keep only a bottle of hand soap and lotion on the countertop, plus a decorative element like a plant or small vase of fresh flowers. And if you wish, add a small clock to keep you on time. This clear and lovely space will give you inspiration to keep the bathroom neat and tidy throughout the day!

# Luxurious linen closets with room to spare



If you're lucky enough to have a linen closet, make the most of its space by getting it organized.

The first step is to pull everything out of the closet, sorting into categories (such as towels, sheets, blankets, and pillows) as you go. You might also find bathroom necessities, such as cleaning supplies, paper products, and medications. That's okay, but remember that the linen closet should not be a catch-all! Once you can see your categories, consider the quantities you own, and begin to downsize. See if you can narrow down your sheet sets to two per bed (one on the bed, and one in the closet). Donate old, ratty towels to your local animal shelter. Get rid of extra blankets and pillows that you no longer use.

Next, begin returning items to the closet. Placement is key! Store bulky items that you use infrequently (such as beach towels or heavy blankets) on the very top shelf. Place items that you use most often at eye level so you can easily reach them. Fold towels neatly and store either by size or set. Or, roll the towels for an eye-pleasing, easy-to-grab storage method. Sheets sets can be slipped into their coordinating pillowcases for easy retrieval, stacking similar sizes in the same row. If you're storing bathroom supplies in the linen closet, be sure to contain them in pretty boxes or baskets, rather than leaving them to fall over. Stash bathroom cleaning products in a handled tote so you can "grab and go" on cleaning day.

Finally, be sure to label the shelves and containers so that items return to their correct "homes," ensuring an organized linen closet for years to come.