

organize today!

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

Closets in Order

Closets are necessary to keep our clothing and other essentials neat and contained. We all need to make the most of our closet space, no matter the size of our homes. But, when space is tight, we need to be really creative and proactive to make that space work for us and our stuff!

In this issue of *Organize Today*, you'll learn simple, common-sense approaches to weeding out your current closets' contents; by downsizing a bit, you'll have more room for the things you truly love or need. While focused on clothing, the tips and supplies recommended here can cross over to any closet organizing project. Make it your goal to have functional, well-organized closets!

Clearing closet clutter without going crazy



Organizing a closet is one of the most satisfying clean-up projects you can tackle. But without a little planning, its sheer enormity can leave you with more chaos than before you started. Start with these tips to clear the clutter, leaving you with only the things you really use.

- Pick one closet to start. Make sure you have space in that room to spread everything out. (A bed works great for this.) You'll be taking out every (yes, EVERY) item in that closet. For each item, ask whether you've used it/worn it in the past year. If not, seriously consider getting rid of it. Knowing that we wear only about 20 percent of our clothes 80 percent of the time will help you let go. Try to touch things only once while going through this process — make a decision then and there, rather than putting items aside to “decide later.”
- Items that you are removing can go in one of four boxes: a trash box (for stuff headed straight to the dump), a repairs box (for items that need repairing), a recycling box (for things that can be recycled, sold or given away), and a transit box (for things that belong in another area of the home). If you have trouble parting with some items, put them in a box, label the box with a date six months from now, and store it out of sight. If you haven't gone into the box by the time the date rolls around, toss or donate it without opening it.
- The hard part is now complete! Now comes the fun of rearranging, organizing, and storing the remaining items. Read on in this issue to learn helpful tips to organize your clothing and more!

A step-by-step guide to a perfect closet

After following the basic clutter-clearing instructions on the previous page, you are now ready to sort and store. Your goal is to come up with a system that will allow you to maintain the de-cluttered space with minimal effort, while allowing you to make the most of your space, time, and wardrobe. And remember that your closet works in conjunction with other storage spaces outside the closet.

Closets should have a clean, fresh coat of light-colored paint. This reflects the light and gives you a solid neutral background to view your clothing against. Take the time to do this now. Give the closet a good vacuuming and dusting, too.

Start sorting. Separate your closet into work and casual wear by item type, then group similar items by color. Button-down shirts, dress pants, blazers, dresses, skirts, etc. should all be batched together so you can quickly see and assess your options. Make a separate pile for each category of casual clothing, such as pants, t-shirts, and sweatshirts. Also group together shoes, belts, and accessories.

Only keep your "A" team or current clothes in your main closet. Shift seasonal clothes, maternity, and "other size" items to another storage space, such as under your bed. Many people can reduce the amount of clothing in

their closet by half if they follow this guideline.

Purge a little more. Once you have everything sorted, you may discover that you own multiples of the same item. This is one last chance to get rid of those items that don't fit, are out of style, or are not practical. (From here on out, keep a give-away box in your closet to make donating easier.) Remember, it's important to let your clothing have a little breathing room to keep it wrinkle-free, as well as to allow you to easily view your closet's contents.



Now that you can see what you actually have, start some measuring. Most clothing needs 1/2 to two inches of space per item. How much of your clothing can you realistically fit in the closet? If it only has one rod across the top, you may want to consider redesigning your closet for maximum space efficiency. (See design resources on the back page.) Or, simple, inexpensive modifications can be made by adding a double hang closet rod to double your hanging space. You may also be able to adjust your

shelves and rods to better accommodate your space needs.

Return clothing to the closet. Organize your clothes to work with your lifestyle. Section garments by type, then by color, so you can always easily see what you have. Hang pants, blazers, button-front shirts, dresses, and skirts. Don't put matching tops and bottoms together; this stops you from seeing other ways to combine them. Arrange clothes so those you wear most often are nearest the front of the closet.

Find storage containers that are sturdy and sized appropriately. Use containers you already own or shop for new ones at stores like Target or The Container Store. Sweaters, t-shirts, and sweatshirts line up nicely on shelves with the help of vertical shelf dividers or placed in clear plastic boxes or hanging canvas shelves. Accessories such as purses, scarves, and belts can be placed in clear boxes or attractive wicker baskets on open shelves.

Assign each item a "home." Designate a shelf, section of rod, or drawer for each category of clothing. You're likely to return items to this space after every use. Come up with a system that will allow you to maintain the de-cluttered space with minimal effort. Also, install adequate lighting that will allow you to view all of your clothing and shelf space.

Always organized...tips for closets of all kinds

- Allow only pressed, clean, ready-to-wear clothes in your closet. If an item needs to be mended, cleaned, or ironed, it should not be in your closet. Keep your ironing or mending pile in a convenient spot so that you can tackle it while watching TV or talking on the phone.
- Place hooks on the back of the closet door to hang bathrobes, belts, or ties, or to lay out your next day's wardrobe.
- Make sure to use ALL closet space. Underneath short-hanging garments, place a low trunk full of sweaters or a set of plastic drawers or a simple wooden dresser filled with lingerie, swimsuits, and socks.
- It's helpful to standardize your hangers. It doesn't matter what type you prefer, just make them consistent and always hang clothes in the same direction. This will help reduce visual clutter and allow you to review your clothes at a glance. Wooden, padded, or tube hangers, rather than cheap wire ones, will keep your clothing in top-notch shape and avoid tangles. Get rid of extra hangers, which just take up space. See if your dry cleaner can recycle your unneeded wire hangers.
- For shoes, consider clear plastic shoeboxes, which keep shoes dust-free and easily viewed. Or use over-the-door shoe bags or a neat shoe rack on the floor.
- Building closet management into your weekly routine will reduce time and stress in your daily quest for determining what to wear. It will also allow you to make the most of your wardrobe and feel great about getting maximum use out of clothes you already own. This project may seem daunting, but its rewards are many! If you're stuck, consider enlisting a trusted friend or professional organizer to help you with the process, especially the clutter-clearing steps.



Affordable closet organizing products

Hanging canvas shelves: Available for under \$15 in a variety of colors, including a neutral canvas shade, they hang from your closet rod to use vertical space to the max. Great for stacking folded clothing! Also great for front hall closets, holding purses, and cold-weather accessories for the entire family.

Clear, plastic boxes: Available for under \$2 each, the small, shoebox size is nice not only for shoes (allowing you to view the contents without opening), but also for accessories like belts, scarves, rolled ties, and small purses. Wonderful for making storage on shelves neat as a pin and easily accessible.

Clear plastic drawers: Available for under \$15 per drawer, they are great for utilizing unused lower space beneath shorter garments. Great for underwear, socks, t-shirts, night clothes, and accessories. Stack two, three, or more to fit your space.

Hanging plastic shoe bags: Available for under \$15, they hang on the back of closet doors to hold shoes or accessories. They also work well in front hall closets to hold going-out-the-door necessities like umbrellas, sunglasses, work IDs, and lint rollers, and in baby rooms to hold diapers, baby powder, small toys, blankets, and more.

Organizing product retailers

Closet Design and Layout:

Visit www.easyclosets.com to find the layout that best represents your closet space. Choose where you want shelves, hanging spaces, and shoe racks, and watch as your closet is designed right before your eyes! Free of charge. You can buy the supplies from the website, or take the plans to your local retailer and buy supplies there.



Also, Home Depot, The Container Store, Organized Living, Closetmaid, and California Closets offer great customized closets (see websites at right). Or type “closet design” and your state into a search engine to find other designers near you.

Supplies for Organizing:

Shop online or find the location nearest you:

- California Closets: www.californiaclosets.com
- Closetmaid: www.closetmaid.com
- Closet Organizers USA: www.closetorganizersusa.com
- Container Store: www.thecontainerstore.com
- Home Depot: www.homedepot.com
- Ikea: www.ikea.com
- Lowe's: www.lowes.com
- Lillian Vernon: www.lillianvernon.com
- Online Organizing: www.onlineorganizing.com/products.asp
- Organize.com: www.organize.com
- Organized Living: www.organizedliving.com
- Storables: www.storables.com
- Target Stores: www.target.com
- Wal-mart Stores: www.walmart.com