

# GET ORGANIZED!

Everyone is ready to go and all you have to do is grab your jacket. You stop at the hall coat closet and start rooting through the accumulation. One tennis racket, a bike helmet, three umbrellas, five sweatshirts, and a few loose socks later, you realize your jacket is not there. Nor are there any other jackets. As a matter of fact, it appears that the coat closet has been over-run by anything and EVERYTHING that is not some form of outerwear.

Maybe this situation adequately describes your hall closet, linen closet, or perhaps every closet-like space within your home. You may not even pay attention to the clutter anymore, having long given up the fight against junk. It is true a closet packed to the brim with stuff can appear quite daunting to overcome.

However, organizing closets in order to make the most of the storage space available is not as complicated as one may believe. The tools that are available are affordable, easy to install, and are flexible enough to work for your home whether building new or simply re-evaluating your current closet space.

The first step in tackling organization is to figure out each closet's purpose. Note that assigning a proper place for everything is not subject to any rules. Perhaps you call the closet between the kids' rooms and the bathroom the "linen" closet, but you actually prefer to keep the towels in the bathroom cupboard. What you would really like to put in this closet are all the board games the kids have stacked up downstairs. This is definitely an option! The most important part of organizing your closets is creating a system that works for you.

Look through what you are storing in your closets now and begin sorting. You should have three decisions to make: Dispose, Donate, or Disperse. Dispos-



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able items are things that are broken or worn beyond functionality. Hanging on to unusable clutter is simply unnecessary and a waste of usable space. Donating unused items that are taking space in your home relieves your clutter and eases your mind while being perfectly useful in someone else's life. Dispersal is the trickier part of the cleaning out process – making sure items you are keeping get to their proper places. Cleaning out your closet space does not mean junking up the rest of the house!

Now that you know what things belong in which closet, it does not mean you can shove everything back into a designated, yet still messy space. Once things have been dispersed, it is time to find the right materials that will allow you easy access to everything you wish to store. If something cannot be seen or easily accessible without causing an avalanche, what good is having it around? The best way to avoid these issues is investing in organizational aids. Some companies sell closet organizer systems that are beautifully customized for your closet uses, your budget, and even your décor. These systems range from

professionally installed dream closets to do-it-yourself quick installations. Others simply recommend pieces to coordinate with your current closet shelving in order to maximize the space. Whatever route you choose, you first need to visualize how you would like each closet to look and work. Discussing these ideas with a professional can point you to the accessories you need for closet efficiency.

There are a few closet fixtures that could make anyone's life easier while making their closets tidier. These can be found as parts of professional systems as well as purchased individually, allowing you to makeover your closets yourself.

## CHANGE YOUR HANGERS

There is a reason the dry cleaners give away those wire hangers for free. They are capable of damaging clothes by snagging, tearing, and misshaping many pieces. Investing in quality hangers is a great way to revitalize your closets. Wood or padded hangers treat your clothing with respect by holding the shape and





reducing snags. From the trendiest suit to the silkiest camisole, these hangers take care of your clothing, eliminating the mess of fallen pieces from when you rifle through the day's options. Even sturdy plastic is acceptable for a slightly more economical approach. Color-coding hangers according to family member also simplifies the laundry process and reminds wayward persons to hang up their clothes.

## HOOKS AND DOUBLE-RODS

Hooks are a simple option for all those accessories and pieces that never quite seem to have a place to rest. Belts, jewelry, bathrobes, pajamas, and towels can all have a designated hook placed wherever the access is ideal, clearing the floor and shelves of the typical clutter. Cup hooks and removable adhesive options are easy to place anywhere there is sufficient space for the hanging item.

Double-rods have a number of functions depending on the use of the closet. Children's closets typically utilize two or three rods for their clothes, letting mom and dad hang out-of-season or special occasion outfits out of reach. The lower two rods are wonderful for small children to reach their own clothing without too much help. In other closets the second rod makes more efficient use of the closet space. Often times an extra shelf can be placed right above the lower rod moving storage space for shoes or boxes up off the floor granting easier access and organization. Remember, the more things appearing in the line of sight, the more likely you are to use them.

## HANGING ORGANIZERS

Hanging organizers have more functions than almost any other organizational accessory. Often labeled as useful for sweaters, these canvas or nylon organizers are an incredible way to add durable, functional, and moveable space to any closet. They typically hang from the closet rod, making the most of the vertical space available. All folding clothes can be placed in cubbies by type making laundry easier to put away and placing all your options within sight. Hanging organizers are especially nice for any family member that has few clothes to hang or who may be learning folding and color coordinating. Hanging organizers come in various shapes and sizes making them useful for shoes, hats, or anything that could use a shelf.

Hanging shoe organizers are another option that can be used in most any closet space for far more than shoes. These are often for over the back of the door and utilize small pouches rather than cubbyholes.



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Using hanging shoe organizers in the kitchen can rid pantries of the small packages that litter the shelves and limit visibility of other items. By hanging the organizer on the pantry door, items like vitamins can be kept high out of reach, while individual snacks can be placed lower for kids to help themselves. Items used on a daily basis like spices, teas, or small packaged mixes will be easier to find than ever.

## FREESTANDING SHELVES

Freestanding shelves are not as flexible as hanging organizers, but are still quite capable of being adjusted or moved. These are wonderful in linen closets or larger spaces that need specific separating and labeling to ensure the easiest access. Freestanding shelves can provide cubbyhole separations for linens to be organized by room, or they can be large, open shelves that may hold labeled boxes. Whatever the preferred system, freestanding shelves are extremely functional and durable, allowing the immediate space to be used adequately without cluttering.

## CLEAR CONTAINERS

Clear containers come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and styles, including hatboxes, photo boxes, and shoe boxes. These are vital to keep odds and ends from wandering the house. They allow you to see exactly what you are storing where, without ever having to pull it down or open it, including clear food storage containers. This means easily seeing what is about to run out in the pantry while ridding the shelves of disorderly, haphazard boxes. If you choose to use a container that is not clear, taking a photograph of the stored items and labeling it will also allow you to know what is inside without too much fuss.

Dividers and small step shelves will keep containers and miscellaneous items tidy and orderly without stacking upon one another, whether it is cans in the pantry or purses in your bedroom. Pull out drawers and shelves also eliminate fumbling and aid the storage of various items that wish to be kept out of sight.

Whatever means you use when fighting the chaos of your closets, remember to find a system that works for your home. Organizing your closets is all about making them simpler, so be careful not to make more work for yourself by investing in systems you will not use. Soon you will be able to find your jacket right where it is supposed to be.

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