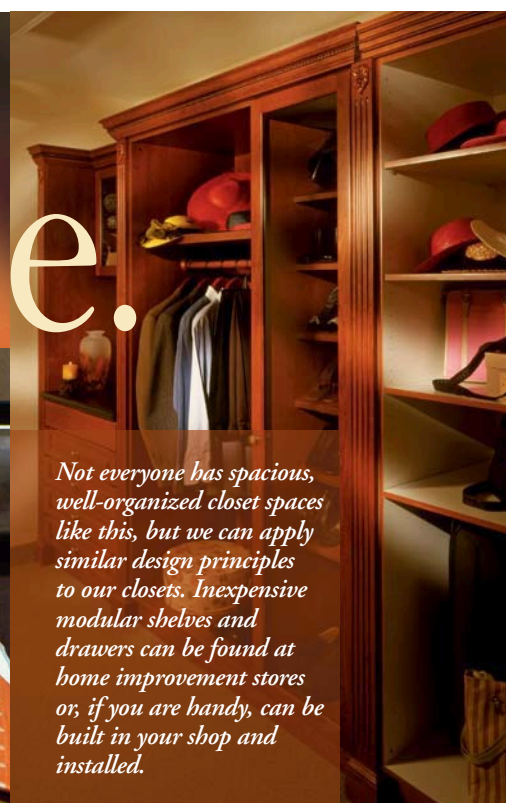


Keep it Simple.

The Keys to Organizing Your Home



Not everyone has spacious, well-organized closet spaces like this, but we can apply similar design principles to our closets. Inexpensive modular shelves and drawers can be found at home improvement stores or, if you are handy, can be built in your shop and installed.

We can all use a little order in our lives. If your home has become overcrowded or you are having trouble finding what you are looking for, it may be time to reassess your organizational skills. Creating orderly systems, and sticking to them, will produce a more pleasant living environment and even makes housekeeping easier.

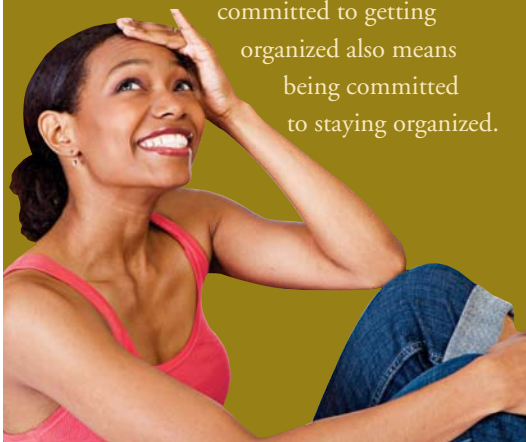
THE KID'S ROOM

- Your kids have toys and clothing that they have outgrown. Now is the perfect time to teach them charity by helping them collect items they can donate to others.
- Store toys in bins and boxes that are clearly labeled so kids can put them away themselves.
- Find colorful storage bins that make cleaning up as fun as playtime.



GETTING STARTED

It takes planning to create an environment that is both harmonious and comfortable. Learning to say goodbye to those “treasures” that we rarely use or even look at may cause you some temporary separation anxiety, but the space you create will make up for the loss. It seems like a daunting task, but it can be fun and invigorating once the process begins, and it can do wonders for your spirit! Remember, being committed to getting organized also means being committed to staying organized.



THE CLOSETS

- Sort closet items into groups. Clothes that are worn often should be the most accessible in your closet. Seasonal clothing should be packed away in storage containers and placed on top shelves that can be easily accessed as the weather changes.
- Always keep your closet floor clear of shoes. Allowing them to pile up on the closet floor can limit your access and can lead to damage if the shoes are stepped on. Shoe cubbies are a perfect low-cost solution.
- Keep like items together such as shirts, sweaters, pants and dresses.
- Use several different storage systems including shelves, drawers, shoe cubbies and upper and lower poles to maximize space and keep items separated and organized.

THE KITCHEN

- Group things that pertain to a particular task together. This will minimize your search and make better use of your time.
- Determine the general flow of your kitchen. Keep glasses near the sink or the refrigerator.
- Maximize your work space by keeping countertops clear of unnecessary items.
- Consider creative storage solutions—for example, transfer spices to sleek, labeled glass tubes.
- Don't make your kitchen a collection area for everything “waiting” to be put away—mail, tools, books, the kids' homework and everything else that does not belong there.



A little creativity will go a long way when you are re-organizing your kitchen space. Think outside-the-box and have fun with it!

TAMING OF THE BEAST

Creative Ideas for Organizing Your Garage



Gardening Tools

Keep gardening tools near the door that leads closest to the yard. This saves you time and energy and helps to keep the area clean. Consider keeping your tools in a handy moving cart, which can save you many trips back and forth. These can be purchased with slots for rakes and larger items. Keep fertilizers and other hazardous material in locked cabinets or at least away from the reach of children.



Sporting Goods

Sporting goods are best organized by how often they are used and who generally uses them. Winter equipment is best kept away from the floor where it can slide around and be damaged. Placing it in high areas attached to hooks will keep it safe and out of the way. Bikes can be kept on hooks against the wall making sure that they are reachable for kids yet close enough to the garage door to avoid scratching cars.



Tools

Investing in a work table or building one yourself enables you to keep tools in an orderly fashion. Using hooks for hanging tools and glass jars for screws and nails can cut your working time by eliminating the time spent searching for a necessary item. If the size of your garage limits you from building a work table, storing tools in bins with labels on them is also an effective means of organizing.



Miscellaneous "Stuff"

Memorabilia, such as scrapbooks and old family treasures, are best kept out of the garage. Moisture can damage these items. Holiday decorations can be stored away in bins so they are easily found but tucked away well enough to eliminate clutter. Chances are that there are old boxes of clothes and toys. Rule of thumb: If they are stored in boxes in the garage, it may be time to part with them.

Knowing how to best organize our lives varies greatly from person to person. There are so many resources available to help you not only de-clutter your home but avoid turning your garage into a household dumping ground. Looking at your lifestyle and designing your living space to fit that lifestyle is the first step in creating an environment that is harmonious and best reflects who you are. You are not alone. Knowing when to part with long held "treasures" is a battle for most people. But many of those "treasures" are actually the culprit when it comes to keeping things clean, simple and manageable.

Be honest with yourself. Know the difference between what you need and what you don't need. Tame the beast and streamline your life.



HOW TO DISPOSE OF UNWANTED ITEMS

ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT

- Check online for local disposal services.
- Depending on their condition, try selling items on eBay or craigslist.
- Plan a garage sale, giving your friends and neighbors a chance to find an item they may need or want.
- Donate to local charities.
- Check with some neighborhood schools and see if they might have a home for some of these items.
- Advertise in your local paper. You might get lucky and have just what someone was looking for.

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

- Household items are greatly needed by many. Clothing, toys and home products are the perfect donation to your local charity.
- Everyone loves to browse through their neighbors' old treasures. Plan a garage sale. It can be a fun way to gather with friends and neighbors.
- We all know the difference between what can be recycled and what is trash. Throw away items that are no longer useful.
- There are countless items listed on eBay every day. See if you can't turn some old items into easy cash.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

- Check online for local disposal services. Ridding yourself of hazardous waste is a serious consideration, and not following the rules can result in heavy fines.
- There are many local services that you can either bring your waste to or that will come and get it. Don't take shortcuts on this even if you only have small amounts, which might seem easy to dispose of.