

Remodel's

25 Secrets of Smart Storage

With a small space comes a big dilemma: **Where do you put all your stuff?** Before you crowd every square inch of your limited square footage with mounds of clutter, **count to 25.** That's how many quick and easy space-saving solutions we have for clearing out chaos and organizing your home. So what are you

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Organization and storage are like weeds in a garden.

No matter how much daily, weekly, and monthly maintenance you provide, new problems tend to creep up. Just like tending those pretty annuals and perennials, care and constant vigilance are the best solutions to get rid of any thorny storage and organization “weeds.”

Unfortunately, as life progresses and possessions grow, your organization challenges begin anew. The issues a single person faces are different than the challenges a couple with young children must conquer. Retirees, too, deal with dissimilar problems than a newly married couple melding two households. The key is to find a method that adapts—to your personality, your needs, and the constraints of your home, time, and space.

One of the keys to getting organized is to look inward. What kind of person are you? What sort of family do you have, and what type of household do you crave? A pack rat has different requirements than a person who keeps just a few slips of paper every year. If you are a collector of any sort, your needs differ drastically from someone who continually pares down possessions. Do you enjoy a burst of “clean sweep” activity in your house several times a year, or do you like a slow, steady progression from room to room? Would you rather clean all the closets in the house before moving on to dressers and shelves? Answering these questions will help you determine the sort of storage mantra that suits you best.

Getting Started

If you've searched for professional advice from any books, you probably have realized there's no shortage of quick-fix ideas devoted to storage and organization. While most authors differ slightly in their recommended plans of attack or methods of execution, each usually presents a slightly different version of a three-pronged approach: assess, analyze, and institute.



Assess. It's an old cliché, but it works: Begin at the beginning. Take stock of your possessions and your keepsakes. What do you use daily, and what hasn't seen the light of day for years? What's broken, doesn't fit, hasn't been played with, or is never used? Discounting items you're keeping for sentimental reasons—a grandmother's platter or your children's first pair of shoes—sort your possessions into “keep,” “throw,” and “donate” piles.

Analyze. Next, appraise your home's storage possibilities. If you are short on closets but have a bounty of wall space, search for clever shelving to substitute for the lack of closed doors. If your bathroom suffers from a dearth of cabinets, stash extra supplies in baskets or crates. Remember: You can't make your home something it is not; you can only maximize the potential it has.

Institute. The final step in organizing and storing your possessions is often the hardest: choosing a routine and sticking to it. If you want to keep a tidy home, you have to establish rules—for yourself and family members—and set both short- and long-term goals. Vow to address your most pressing problems before tackling more time-consuming tasks. For example, if you need to store a burgeoning stack of photographs but would like them organized into albums, it's important to gain control of your collection first. Group pictures—by year, person, event, place—into archival boxes, and maintain that system for any new photos. Then, when you have time, slowly work your way toward creating albums. Remember: Organization and storage issues aren't solved overnight.

There's one final note to this pesky problem of organization and storage: Don't try to be a perfectionist. There will be “weeds” that pop up from time to time, and you may not have everything in its place each day. The important thing is to work toward creating a

Kitchens

Looking for a pen? A cookie sheet?
A spatula and sauté pan?

Like most homes, a kitchen is the spot for many disparate items. Don't cram your mess behind closed cabinet doors; instead, banish any trouble spots with a few well-thought-out tips to keep your kitchen calm and clean.

(1-7)

1 **Roll with it.** While an expansive kitchen may >> be on your dream list, if your actual room is a bit more space-challenged, buy a small rolling cart. You'll gain shelves, workspace, and flexibility all at once.



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Get pantry savvy. Clear plastic or glass containers are a sure bet to organize your kitchen pantry. Decant dry goods into stackable containers, and corral small items—baking chocolates or cooking extracts, even cookie cutters—into large, labeled containers. You'll be able to quickly inventory your kitchen's contents and avoid duplicate buying.



Go vertical. Cookie sheets, baking racks, and other large kitchen items >> quickly get lost in a horizontal storage setup. Instead, buy an inexpensive vertical divider to stand them upright, and group same-size items together for ease of organiza-





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Cook without clutter.

What cook doesn't dream of clean, uncluttered drawers? Inch closer to that fantasy with an easy trick: Free up a whole drawer by corralling large, unwieldy utensils in a crock. Choose one that fits your style, and keep it close to the cooktop.



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Cover it up. If you're forever searching for a lid that fits a pan, search no more. Try one of these three solutions: Store pans covered with their lids, stash lids upright in the same drawer as your pans, or dedicate one deep drawer solely to lid storage.

6



« **Add some spice.** Spices smell nice but organizing them is rarely a pretty task. If you aren't one to alphabetize the jars, invest in stacking shelves or a rotating carousel. You'll never again reach for the ginger, only to be stuck with the cilantro.



Remember Fido. If you're planning a remodel—or even a redo—of your kitchen, take inventory of those pesky items that never seem to have a home. Can't find a spot for the pet food? Consider a built-in drawer, or simply a clear plastic tub tucked under a shelf in the pantry. You'll keep the dog happy and your kitchen clutter-free.

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Work Space

Most homes have one multipurpose room: an office tucked into a kitchen corner, a laundry/entry, or a crafts room that houses the family computer. It's the space that serves many needs, and as a consequence, is continually prone to clutter. Stop those storage demons with a few simple ideas.

(8-14)

Find your niche. Perhaps scrapbooking is your passion, >> or maybe you run a home-based business—but your square footage doesn't allow for a dedicated room. Carve out your own space-saving niche in a closet or stand-alone armoire. Once you remove the shelves and open the doors wide, most closets and armoires are deep enough to use as a small desk with a set of shelves and



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Keep it in the box. If photographs spill out of drawers everywhere, start a simple filing system: Keep all images from each year in a separate, photo-safe box. Download digital images into year-by-year files, too. When you have more time, categorize images by event, person, or place.



10

Hide the clutter. Even if you save every scrap of paper, photograph, and magazine, there's no reason to keep your "treasures" in plain sight. Find clever, hidden places for those not-so-organized items—a plastic container under a shower bench for bath-time toys, a filing cabinet under a fabric skirt for letters and birthday cards, and an under-the-table basket for all your favorite magazines.

Double up. If you need an extra spot to stash blankets and pillows or a place for a family file cabinet, try a double-duty piece of furniture—a wood two-drawer file cupboard that acts as a side table or a chest that serves as a coffee table. You'll add character and function in one quick turn.

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12 Make it pretty. Storage doesn't have to be boring. Take the laundry room, for example: Decant your soaps into wide-mouth glass jars; you'll spruce up the space and have easier access to needed supplies.



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<< **Keep it kid-friendly.** While your kids may love to color, cut, and glue, it's no fun to drag out supplies every time the artistic urge strikes. To keep those tiny Picassos happy—and amused—store supplies in low drawers or on a work surface, organized in easy-to-access plastic containers. Your little ones will be able to reach whatever they need—and better yet, put it away, too.



14

Keep it clear. You may love each and every one of your kids' drawings and doodles, but organizing those troves of paper is a daunting task. Try this: Buy an over-size clear folder for each child, and tuck all drawings and papers inside. At the end of the school year, ask your child to help sort through the stack; each of you can select two or three favorites as keepsakes.

Bedroom and Closets

If **storage is lacking**, then your bedroom and closet are unlikely to be spots that soothe and allow for rest. Bring tranquility back to your sleep zone with these ideas to clear out unused clothes, toys, and other clutter-prone items.

(15-22)

Keep it stylish. Mix and match is no way to set up a well-organized closet. Organize your clothes either by color or by style—long-sleeved shirts together, jackets in another section, and so on. You'll eliminate that frustrating morning hunt for your favorite pair of pants, and keep hangers neat and tidy, too.



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Love your inner pack rat. If you can't bear to part with the stuffed animals from your childhood, or have one too many pieces of china for your own good, don't despair. Add a shelf, positioned close to the ceiling, to organize, display, and store those precious collectibles.



17

Teach your kids. Even if your kids can't read, they can identify pictures. So take what they know, and put it to work: Organize toys into separate containers with a photo of the contents (dolls, cars, blocks, etc.) attached to the front. (If kids can read, use a label instead.) Kids can find just what they're looking for—and put it away when they're done. Try it in your mudroom, too, with hats and mittens or shades and warm-weather gear.



19

Use the door. Starved for spots to stash clutter-prone items? Check out the back of doors, from closets to pantries to laundry rooms. A cloth over-the-door organizer adapts well to a bathroom or kid's room, with pockets to tuck extra towels, supplies, or toys.

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Make a donation. Keep up with your kid's growth spurts by tucking a plastic bin in a corner of her closet. When she's outgrown clothing, toss it in the container; once it's full, it's time to make a donation trip. It's a great solution for toys,

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Change with the seasons.

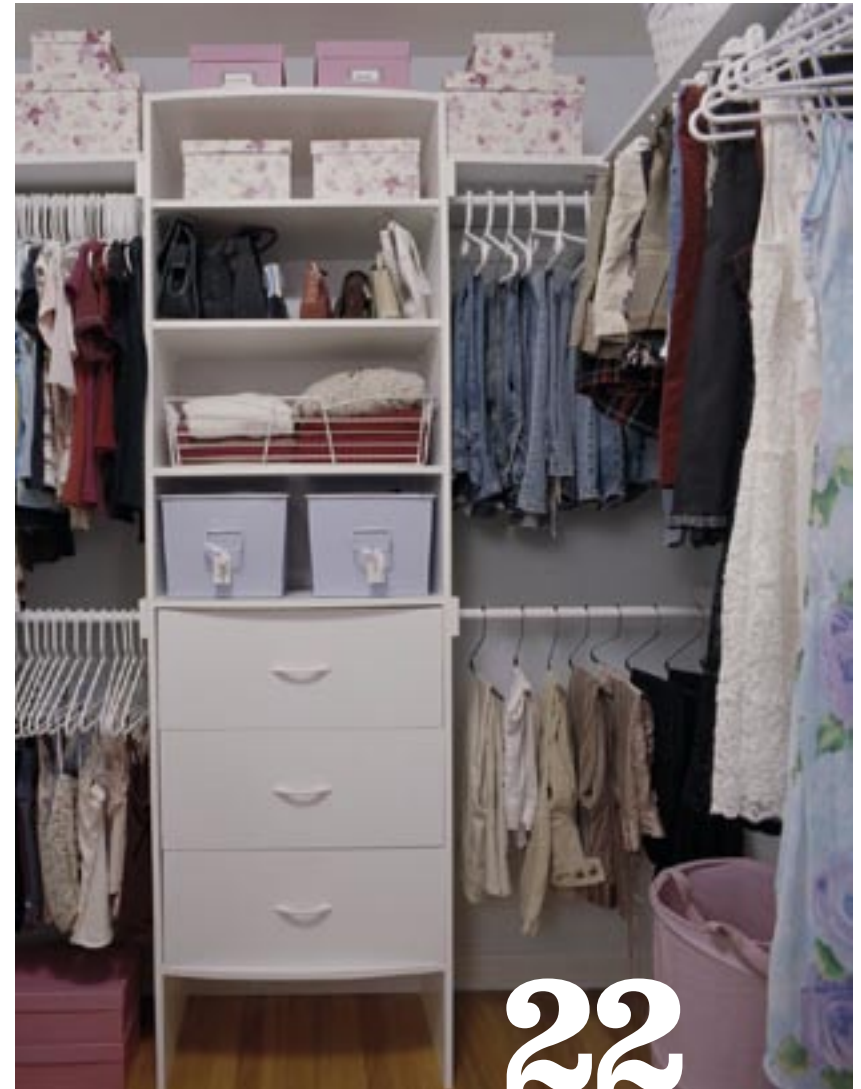
It's an old trick but a good one: As the seasons change, rotate clothing out of your closet, storing out-of-season items in under bed containers. You'll give your clothes more room to breathe, and also take stock of items you really wear—and those you should donate to a worthy cause.





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Go red, white, or blue. It's simple to organize—and store—your linens, including towels and sheets. Pick one color per room—yellow for the master bathroom, white for the guest room—and group sets of freshly laundered items by color. If your linen closet is too full to stash extra towels, try rolling them up and stashing them in a pretty basket or stacking them on top of a side table.



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Go low. If you haven't installed a second rod, take advantage of the lower half of your closet's square footage. Use the upper rod for shirts and jackets and the bottom one for pants and skirts.

Mudroom, Garage and Basement

Cute opener text goes here need a new opener for the combined mudroom/basement/garage section. Please write a new opener to go here, can be a little bit longer if you need more space, maybe a line or so. Thank you very much.

(23-25)

Pint-size your storage. If you want your children to >> hang up their coats and put their clothes and toys away, create kid-friendly closet and mudroom zones. Start by hanging pegs at their heights, and installing sized-down closet storage units.

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Move outside. The mudroom is no place for basketballs, baseballs, dodgeballs, or footballs; move the sports stuff outside to the garage. Choose containers convenient for storing odd-size items, such as open-front, stackable, metal units; they'll wash easily and withstand the elements, too.



Climb the walls. Your garage real estate is a prime storage spot—just glance overhead or look at the walls. Hang wire units above for seasonal storage, and attach wall racks to organize garden tools and supplies.

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