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# Organizing

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# CALIFORNIA CLOSETS®





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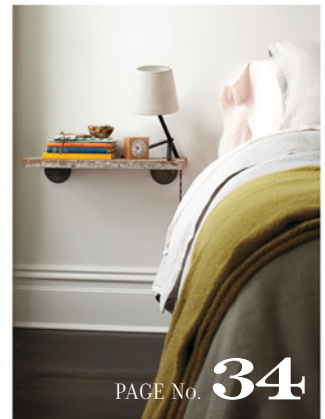
Photograph by  
Francois Dischinger



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# The Best of **MARTHA STEWART LIVING** **Organizing**



How does  
our staff  
stay organized  
at home?

I have seasonal  
pillow shams that  
I rotate through-  
out the year to change  
up the look of my  
living room. They  
are organized by  
season on clip hangers  
that I store in a gar-  
ment bag in the attic.

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are a mom's  
best friend. They  
are perfect for  
storing everything  
from crayons to  
my daughter's hair  
tie collection.

Ball jars.  
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better when  
collected in a series  
of Ball jars.

To find things  
in a snap, organize  
small items into  
clear plastic stack-  
able bins and don't  
forget the labels.



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## A well-ordered home

It's a given: Being organized in life and home is not easy. However, if your living spaces are well set up and well designed, to keep most of your things in their own place, then you are moving in the right direction.

All the projects in this magazine have been created to guide you on the path toward orderliness. Many have been tested by me in my own home, and I can truthfully say they work. I have a very busy house: people coming and going, three cats, four dogs, 20 canaries, collectibles, and clothing, all of which need to be well cared for, well organized, and neatly displayed. Even my desks—and I have three of them for different functions—are designed to be efficient, comfortable, and “connected,” with Internet access and the ability to print and copy documents and to store and print photographs.

My basement is arranged to keep and display a wide range of contents. It was once a dingy, dark, damp space but now is a well-lit series of rooms: One room is the laundry, where I have washers and dryers, a folding and ironing table, and big sinks for bathing animals and laundering sweaters. There are a couple of drying racks and shelving for laundry-related items. There is also a dog-grooming table along with shelves full of dog- and cat-grooming supplies.

Another room is set up for gift wrapping, packing, and shipping. It's also used for storage of paper goods and plastic tubs of all sizes for many different uses. And in another room is a system of rolling shelving designed to hold my extensive collection of cooking utensils, fine china, glassware, and flower vases and bowls. I do not know what I would do without this clean and useful basement.

Even the attic is carefully arranged to hold as much of my linen and fabric collections as possible. This space needs frequent rearranging, but it is pretty orderly.

Each of us has specific needs, and it is the objective of this issue to help you get organized. Please enjoy our ideas, and let us know how you have implemented them.

*Martha Stewart*

### Organizing 101

We've distilled decades of organizing advice into seven basic principles and included examples of each throughout this issue. Keep them in mind as you tackle your own projects, and you'll find there's always an easy solution at hand.

#### 1. cut the CLUTTER

*Too much stuff is the enemy of a well-organized space. Start by taking a good look around, then pare down.*

#### 2. think in MULTIPLES

*Matching containers make an organized space a more beautiful one.*

#### 3. rethink, reuse, REPURPOSE

*There's no rule that says you have to use furniture for its intended purpose. A piece of office furniture with ample storage can offer the perfect solution when you need extra space.*

#### 4. store it where you USE IT

*In deciding where to keep things, consider how frequently and where you use them.*

#### 5. maximize SPACE

*If storage is at a premium, it's time to get creative. Look high and low: Is there room above the bathroom door for a shelf? Can those few inches beneath the kitchen cabinet accommodate a hidden drawer?*

#### 6. keep it TOGETHER

*Grouping like items saves extra steps and time. Stow postage stamps along with stationery and envelopes; scarves and gloves with winter coats; vases with floral foam and shears; and so on.*

#### 7. plan AHEAD

*Once you have succeeded in putting your home in order (congratulations!), devise a system that will help keep it that way. Set realistic goals, and schedule time on your calendar to accomplish each task (see the chart on page 128 for suggestions).*





#### MAKE AN ENTRANCE

Here, a minimal bookcase is turned on its side, fitted with casters for easy transport, and topped with a custom cushion to make an attractive (and comfortable) storage bench. On the wall, equestrian-style aluminum hooks hold coats, hats, and umbrellas; hang these at staggered heights so everyone, even kids, can reach them.

# entryways



As far as high-traffic areas go, the entryway takes top prize: It's usually the **LAST STOP IN THE MORNING AND THE FIRST STOP IN THE EVENING**. With designated landing spots, it'll be **EASY TO FIND** necessary items like coats, keys, and bags without having to search high and low.



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# Organizing ENTRYWAYS

Store off-season gear (hats, gloves, and scarves) up top until needed.



Stock up on slippers in a couple of sizes for guests.

A wipeable liner will help you keep shelves clean and free of dirt.



Group rain gear together: umbrellas, packable ponchos, and hats.

Keep a stash of sun hats for all family members.

A small step stool tucked into a low shelf is convenient for putting on shoes and reaching up high.



# Entry-hall sanity saver

A typical family's key to stress-free morning departures is a cabinet by the door that is part shoe closet and part home office, with everyone's gear in clear view and grouped by function.



## Sports Center

Gloves and shin guards get checked in at the door. Clean and refill bottles, and stash them here so your kids remember to put them in their backpacks.



## Family Calendar

This door holds a dry-erase board for the current and upcoming weeks and a pocket below (see opposite page) for outbound mail and forms.

Dry-erase weekly calendars (similar to shown), by Office by Martha Stewart, \$6 each, staples.com.



## Dog Bin

Store leashes, pet-waste bags, a dark towel to wipe wet paws, and treats at an accessible height so everyone can walk the dog.



## Mini Desk

For all the things you forget to put in your bag (hair bands), or apply (sunblock, lip balm), or run the risk of losing (car key)—plus a tucked-away power strip that guarantees a powered phone and your undivided attention come 7 p.m.

A clearly visible shelf or basket for like items keeps everyone on task.

Foul-weather and play shoes, umbrellas, shawls, and slippers get their own baskets.



Taking off shoes at the door protects your floors, so have a basket of slippers handy for your family and guests.



In addition to a doormat, an outdoor rug at the entryway keeps dirt at the door. Plus, it's stylish and easy to clean.

## GET THE LOOK



Saved by the Cube bin locker basket, in Silver, \$25, landofnod.com.



Small adjustable acrylic stacking tray, \$9, containerstore.com.



Wire basket, from \$25, www.brookfarmgeneralstore.com.



Catamaran Stripe indoor/outdoor rug, in Platinum/Ivory, from \$41, dashandalbert.com.



Cotton plain-weave cushion slippers, in Brown, \$11, muji.com/us.



## Hooked up

For the jackets, umbrellas, backpacks, and purses that can pile up, take a cue from restaurants by installing double ceiling hooks underneath a shelf. Start with a shelf that's at least 1/2 inch thick. Paint it the same color as your wall for a custom look, and attach it using the proper anchors for your wall type. Attach the hooks to the underside.

**Double ceiling hooks** (similar to shown), in Chrome, by Richelieu Hardware, \$3 each, [goingknobs.com](http://goingknobs.com). **Kånken mini backpack**, in Brick, \$65, [fallraven.us](http://fallraven.us).

Protect off-season coats from moths. Pack away jackets in breathable cotton garment bags. Hang a cedar plank—a natural moth repellent—in each one. If a plank seems to be losing its scent, rub the surface with coarse sandpaper (outdoors or in a well-ventilated area). Digital pictures, tucked into card stock tags with windows, identify the contents inside each garment bag.



Good strong hangers are important. Flimsy dry-cleaner freebies often lead to coats on the floor. Assign each family member a color for his or her hangers. Try using ribbon or paint.



Wool scarves and mittens are ready to wear from one season to the next when wrapped in acid-free tissue paper and slipped into labeled craft boxes (available at organizing stores).







## The hang of it

"It's dangerously easy to get comfortable with the daily fight for your coats and boots, but don't start thinking of your closet as a shove-all," says New York City professional organizer Erica Ecker. Indeed, the first step in streamlining the space is going through it item by item and asking yourself if each thing really belongs there. "This is an active closet, not a storage closet," points out Stacey Platt, author of *What's a Disorganized Person to Do?* (Artisan, 2010). Aim to have things that pertain only to coming and going. The laziest system makes the best system: If you know you'll never put your shoes in individual boxes, don't even try. Be realistic. This is true for yourself and the rest of your family: If, for example, your husband has yet to place his jacket on a hanger, it might be time to let it go and assign him a coat hook.

**Diamond indoor/outdoor rug**, in Platinum/White, 4' x 6' **\$149**, [dashandalbert.com](http://dashandalbert.com). **Cap'n Basket**, in White/Red, **\$100**, [shop.doujohnston.net](http://shop.doujohnston.net).

### GET THE LOOK



**Plush towel collection**, by Martha Stewart Collection, from **\$12** each, [macys.com](http://macys.com).



**Mercantile stacking bins**, in Weathered White, **\$349** each, [rhhbabyandchild.com](http://rhhbabyandchild.com).



**Streamline hooks**, in Brass, **\$16** each, [anthropologie.com](http://anthropologie.com).



**Modern weave harvest basket**, **\$39**, [westelm.com](http://westelm.com).



## Organizing ENTRYWAYS



### KEY CORRAL

Where are the keys? Borrow an idea from innkeepers: Hang everyone's keys in a box. That way, if someone needs to move a car or unlock a bike, there's no need to hunt for the key. This box of unfinished pine was painted white and given a porcelain knob. But an old medicine cabinet or a cigar box can do the trick, too, with a few cup hooks screwed inside.

## Kitchen caboodle

Don't be afraid to steal ideas from other rooms—a sleek stainless pot rack (*above*) relocated to the foyer proves adept at corralling clutter. The matching magnetic strip holds receipts and pretty postcards. Stacking bins can be labeled by family member or category (e.g., bills, catalogs).

## Outta sight

Ceramic tangines are great for couscous, but they're also an artful way to keep sundries contained and tucked away. This area is the first thing you see when you walk in the door, so why not make it beautiful?





# Square it all away<sup>3</sup>

Which loose bits drive you to your wit's end? It varies by person, so we devised a customizable setup that works for someone with four sets of keys, five favorite gadgets, six magazine subscriptions—or all three at once. A simple wire-screen panel holds smaller items, while a basket becomes your home's in/out box. The cubbyhole console keeps the larger stuff stowed. At last, a proper place to stash your handbag!

## HOW-TO

Assemble 4 **heavy-duty canvas stretchers** to form a frame. **Staple hardware cloth**, or wire screen, along top face of frame. Repeat on bottom, pulling screen tight. Repeat with sides. Trim excess, overhanging screen to make even with frame edges. **Spray paint** or brush on semi-gloss latex paint. Cover small **cans** (mini paint tins work well) with **contact paper**, and use an **awl** to punch holes near their rims. Hang with **S-hooks**. For keys, paint the hooks and pair each with a **medallion** tied to the screen. **Magnets** keep notes and lists handy.

**Heavy-duty canvas stretcher bars**, from \$10 each, [utrechtart.com](http://utrechtart.com). **Hardware cloth** (wire screen), by Yardgard, \$13 per roll, [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com). **6-cube organizer** (similar to shown), in White, by Martha Stewart Living, \$45, [homedecorators.com](http://homedecorators.com). **Wire farmhouse basket** (similar to shown), \$8, [worldmarket.com](http://worldmarket.com).





## Organizing Units

A well-outfitted entry invites neatness. Here, a Shaker-style mail basket and key hooks promote easy comings and goings. Bins on casters slide under the bench, designed with them in mind, but a cushioned seat can do double duty when it tops cubbies.

Solid brass wardrobe hooks, (113D), from \$6 each, and cast-iron wardrobe hooks (298C-N11), \$10 each, Crown City Hardware, [restoration.com](http://restoration.com).

## GET THE LOOK



Large woven mail basket, \$49, [houseofantiquehardware.com](http://houseofantiquehardware.com).



Galvanized rolling tote, \$60, [cb2.com](http://cb2.com).



Cubbie-storage bench with seat, by Martha Stewart Living, \$70, [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com).



## Orderly array<sup>3</sup>

A strategic application of paint gives a wall-mounted half-bench and high shelf of the same length the illusion of a built-in unit. Paint them the same color, then mount them on a wall with a square painted to coordinate.

EMILY KATE ROEMER (BASKET), JIM BASTARDO (ENTRYWAY)





## Built-in minimalism

While a multitasking approach suits some—especially families with many members entering and exiting—a simpler setup may be enough for others. Combine just a few essentials to create an entry that's both well-equipped and welcoming. The floating shelf (*below*) serves as a table, with a bench for removing shoes or setting bags. A tray holds keys and a cell phone. When you're ready to change the style of a minimalist foyer, simply switch trays.



## Raise it up

Wall-mounted nightstands fill in for a larger shelf or table in a narrow apartment hallway (*above*); they have drawers for storage, plus surface space for small displays. A full-length mirror makes the area feel larger. If space is tight, don't worry about crowding everything together: A bench on a far wall serves as a temporary perch—even for curious pets.

TOP, FROM LEFT: ERIC PIASECKI, SIMON WATSON

### GET THE LOOK



Grasmere framed mirror, by Martha Stewart Living, \$35, [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com).



Slice grey wall-mounted storage shelf, \$149, [cb2.com](http://cb2.com).



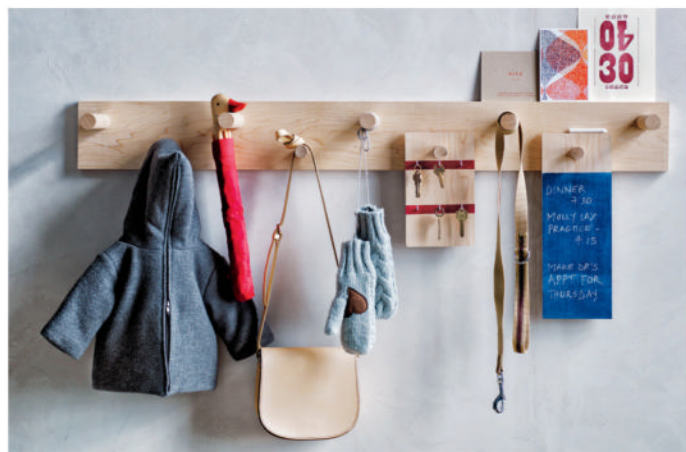
Keep Good Company découpage letter tray, \$165, [johnderian.com](http://johnderian.com).



Linework vase, in Honeycomb, \$29, [westelm.com](http://westelm.com).



## Good Things for entryways



### coat hooks

This streamlined version of a classic Shaker peg rail works well in any busy entryway. Hanging a few key or memo panels (painted with chalkboard paint) helps keep everything organized.

#### TOOLS AND MATERIALS

- Maple board, ¾ inch by 48 inches by 6 inches, plus scraps
- Clamp
- 2 flat boring bits, 1 inch and 1¼ inches
- Drill
- Sandpaper, 220 grit
- 3 drywall screws
- Wall anchors (optional)
- Coping saw
- 2 oak dowels, 1-inch and 1¼-inch diameter
- Wood glue (optional)
- Brush (optional)
- Rubber mallet

#### HOW-TO

- 1.** Place board on top of scrap wood, and clamp both to a work surface.
- 2.** Download plan at [marthastewart.com/coat-racks](http://marthastewart.com/coat-racks). Mark wood with a pencil according to plan. With boring bits, drill holes almost through board; sand. Drill drywall screws through 3 bored holes to attach to wall. (Use wall anchors as needed.)
- 3.** With saw, cut 1-inch dowel into 5-inch lengths, and 1¼-inch dowel into 6-inch lengths; sand ends. If using glue, brush some lightly inside holes. With mallet, tap dowels into holes (sand ends as needed to fit). Wipe away excess glue with a damp paper towel.

Maple board, 6", \$19 per ft., and oak dowels, 1", \$6, and 1¼", \$9, [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com).



**Single-tier lockers** (similar to shown), 12" x 15" x 72", in Tan, \$75 each, [globalindustrial.com](http://globalindustrial.com). **Multi-surface satin acrylic craft paint**, in Beach Glass, Gray Wolf, and Pumpkin, by Martha Stewart Crafts, \$2 for 2 oz., [michaels.com](http://michaels.com).

### clutter control

The last time you had a locker, it may have held your algebra book and pages ripped from *Tiger Beat*. These days, though, lockers can serve as catchalls at home for your kids' mountains of stuff. Placed in the entryway or garage, these child-height lockers will encourage self-sufficiency, get everyone out the door faster, and maybe even stave off the familiar, "Hey, where's my...?"

### think outside the box

Metal mailboxes offer a stylish way to organize a front hall or a mudroom. The magazine hooks provide a perfect home for raincoats, scarves, and umbrellas; hats, gloves, and mittens fit nicely inside the boxes. Available inexpensively through online auction sites, these boxes get a crisp look when spray-painted white. A bonus: They're magnetic, so you can easily adhere notes and favorite images to them.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: CHRIS COURT, HELEN NORMAN, AARON DYER



# Ask Martha<sup>3</sup>

Keeping a foyer tidy and clean, giving a narrow hall a wide-open feel, bringing order to an entryway, and more

## FOOT TRAFFIC

**Q:** *I have light-colored carpeting throughout my home. Is there a polite way to ask guests to take off their shoes when they arrive?*

**A:** There's no need to be shy or apologetic about asking guests to remove their shoes. Lots of people follow a shoes-off policy in their homes—and not just in bad weather. Like you, some have light carpets or gleaming hardwood floors that they want to keep clean and in good condition. Others come from a country, such as Japan or India, where it's customary to remove shoes at the door. These days, it's not an unusual request here.

So absolutely mention your preference to first-time visitors. When people arrive, say, "We usually take our shoes off inside."

Do you mind doing so?" You may find you don't even have to. When guests see others' footwear by the door, they may take the hint. You can also offer slippers or flip-flops. But if your guests seem uncomfortable removing their shoes, don't make an issue of it. Let them keep their shoes on.



## DECORATING A HALLWAY

**Q:** *I have a long, narrow hallway. How can I make it look less confined?*

**A:** A hallway is usually a good place to display art or photography, but if it is narrow, those details can make it feel cramped. The easiest way to open up the space is to hang large mirrors on the walls, which will make the hallway appear wider than it is. Lining it with sconces has the same effect, creating pools of light that will brighten the area.

Paint can also do wonders. A bold color will give the hallway a warm look, making it more inviting and adding another decorative element. Choose a color that works with existing hues.

If a vivid hue is not to your taste, try this trick: Paint the ceiling and the uppermost section of the wall a lighter shade than the rest of the hallway, and add molding for a finished look. This effect visually expands the top of the hallway and makes the whole area feel roomier. With a level and a pencil, mark a straight line along the walls four to six inches from the ceiling. Using the marks as a guide, glue molding along the marks, and then nail the molding to the wall. Next, paint the molding, the wall above it, and the ceiling in a color lighter than the one on the rest of the wall.

## ENTRYWAY ORGANIZING BASICS

**Q:** *How can I keep my entryway clean?*

**A:** In some houses, the front door is the main entrance for the whole family; in others, a back door or a mudroom serves this purpose, and the front entrance is used primarily for guests. Depending on where you live, you may use the entryway to accommodate muddy boots and winter coats; those in warmer climates may use it year-round for gardening gear.

Any entrance will stay cleaner—and make the best impression on visitors—if it is well organized and cared for. If you have an opportunity to choose the flooring, opt for a low-maintenance material that can withstand everyday wear and tear, such as wood, vinyl, or laminate. Avoid choosing a surface that will be too slippery when wet, such as polished stone, or applying treatments, like floor wax, that will make it so. The entryway floor should not be carpeted as it will become too dirty, although you can add a washable throw rug or runner on a slip-proof pad. Place doormats inside and out, to reduce the amount of dirt that enters the home and to minimize cleaning. The indoor mat should be made of an absorbent woven cloth, machine-washable if possible, and the mat outside constructed of a rugged natural fiber, such as coir, to remove grit from the bottoms of shoes.

Once a week, as part of your cleaning routine, vacuum and mop entryway floors, dust shelves, sort out bins, and wash throw rugs and runners in the machine if possible. Of course, much depends on the time of year; you may need to increase the frequency during the rainy or snowy periods or whenever mud gets tracked indoors.

## GIVING ENTRY CLUTTER THE BOOT

**Q:** *My foyer is always cluttered with boots in winter. How can I keep the area neat this time of year?*

**A:** Sheet pans and cooling racks make ideal portable drying racks for wet shoes and boots. They're inexpensive and dishwasher-safe. If you'd like, lay a piece of heavy-duty shelf-liner paper, cut to fit, underneath them to protect the floor. Look for oversize professional baking racks and sheet pans at a baking-supply store or in a cooking-supply website; they're a little deeper and, most important, will fit more shoes and boots.





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*Quartz, or engineered-stone, countertops can take whatever you dish out; the material is stain- and scratch-resistant and easy to clean. Use it behind the stove, too, and you can wipe away splatters in seconds.*

Weston cabinetry, in Persian Gray laminate, Lacombe Avenue Island, in High-Gloss Picket Fence, Quartz countertop and backsplash, in Cove, and Finger Pull hardware, in Medium and Wide, in Bedford Nickel, all by Martha Stewart Living, [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com).

# kitchens



The kitchen may very well be the **MOST POPULAR ROOM IN YOUR HOME**, and with good reason. The important thing to remember when organizing the space: **KEEP THINGS YOU USE MOST WITHIN REACH**. Storing things near where you need them means saved steps—and **SAVED TIME**. When you're trying to get dinner on the table, every second counts.

ANNIE SCHLECHTER





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pulls us apart.

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**ADD BOLD WALL AND WINDOW TREATMENTS**

*While striking, the ikat pattern lining the walls of the shelves (opposite page) brings a cheerful energy to the room without overwhelming it.*

## Eliminate Boundaries

Newer homes and renovations often utilize the “open concept” floor plan, where the kitchen, dining area, and family room seem to flow together.





# Accessorize with color

Crisp and white and bathed in sunlight, the room could appear antiseptic. But a collection of brightly colored glasses, mugs, trays, and cookware enlivens the overall look of a predominantly white kitchen.



## GET THE LOOK



Seamless retro background, 48" by 48", in Modern Ikat, \$70, [wallmonkeys.com](http://wallmonkeys.com).



Channel cabinet pull, by Martha Stewart Living, \$4, [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com).



White square-rim lacquer tray, in Thai Blue \$34, [westelm.com](http://westelm.com).

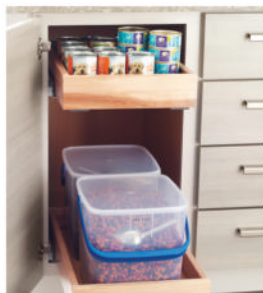


## All in the details

Whether you have a walk-in pantry or just a couple of cabinets devoted to dry foods, keeping them organized makes meal-planning easier. It even saves money, since you're less likely to buy things you already have. The addition of pull-out shelves means nothing gets lost in the back of the cabinet.

### Prep for Pets

Store dry food in big bins that you can scoop right out of; put them on a pull-out shelf, where they're out of the way but don't require any heavy lifting.



### Clean Up

No more rummaging around under the sink; a narrow pull-out cabinet is the perfect size for paper towels, sponges, and cleaners.



### Recycling Station

Hang bags near the bins inside a cabinet door, and tack up your town's recycling guidelines, too. An in-counter compost bin makes it a cinch to save scraps.



### Stay Charged

Add a charging station with a USB port for all your devices in an out-of-the-way spot.



### Stock Up for Kids

Choose a drawer that children can reach themselves, and fill it with sturdy dishware (as well as a few craft supplies to keep little hands busy in the kitchen).



### SNEAK IN STORAGE

Magnetic strips inside the pantry door hold tins that can be used for small items (such as these sprinkles and sanding sugars).

### LABEL IT

Marking where different types of foods go makes it easier to keep things tidy—especially if you have several people in your home putting away groceries and cooking.

### DECANT DRY FOODS

Buying in bulk is economical and less wasteful when it comes to packaging. Use airtight containers or Mason jars to store foods like beans and grains. You can also decant foods from opened packages—a half-box of pasta, for example.

### ADD BASKETS

Potatoes and onions shouldn't be kept in airtight containers or together. Baskets or open bins allow air to circulate.

# Simple style

For the Shakers, keeping things neat and clean showed respect for God, since dirt was considered a sign of the devil. Peg rails keep clutter out of the way. The only ornamentation in this kitchen comes from the beauty of the materials: soapstone counters, yellowware bowls, and painted cabinetry.



## GET THE LOOK



Glass food-storage containers, by Martha Stewart Collection, \$25 for a set of 4, [macys.com](http://macys.com).



Shaker pegs, in Maple, by Woodworks, from 15¢ each, [craftparts.com](http://craftparts.com).



Sedona large tote, in Honey, \$40, [crateandbarrel.com](http://crateandbarrel.com).



Single 20-quart pull-out waste container, by Rev-A-Shelf, \$35, [bedbathandbeyond.com](http://bedbathandbeyond.com).



## Take on the tricky stuff

When we asked our Facebook community for its kitchen-organizing problems, the same issues came up again and again. So we set out to find solutions. First, we measured our cabinets and drawers. Then we did some creative shopping, looking not just at housewares stores but at office-supply stores for organizers that would bring order to storage areas.

### 1 Baking Sheets and Cutting Boards

Instead of stacking these items and making them hard to access, stand them up in sturdy dividers (these were made for file folders). This cabinet above the wall oven is a convenient spot for them.

### 2 Leftover and Lunch Containers

Consider buying one good-quality brand of food-storage containers so they nest; store tops separately in dividers. Keep them with lunch sacks and water bottles to pack lunches in a cinch.

### 3 Pots and Pans

Drawers are an excellent alternative to cabinets for some items—you can reach everything easily. This one has pegs that can be moved to create custom spots for pans. Add a divider to stand up lids along the side.

### 4 Spices

A single layer is the goal, so you can see what you have. These low racks for drawers fit jars of various sizes. We decanted spices into clear jars and added clip-art labels (find them at [marthastewart.com/spice-jar-labels](http://marthastewart.com/spice-jar-labels)).



#### GET THE LOOK



Spice jar replacements,  
\$20 for a set of 12, [williams-sonoma.com](http://williams-sonoma.com).



French linen tea towels,  
\$25 each, [canvashomestore.com](http://canvashomestore.com).



Stackable bamboo  
drawer organizers, from \$4 each,  
[containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com).



Glass food-storage containers,  
by Martha Stewart Collection, \$50 for a  
12-piece set, [macys.com](http://macys.com).

TOP: ANNIE SCHLECHTER (4)





## 1 Table Linens

A few long dividers—these bamboo ones are expandable—keep stacks of napkins and dish towels orderly. Because you can place them just where you want, you can make a compartment that's the perfect size for napkin rings or anything else.

## 2 Utensils and Knives

Divide a large drawer into compartments by fitting together bamboo boxes according to your needs. This knife holder is flexible—instead of pre-sized slots, it has thin strips of soft cork that protect the blades, so it works for different sizes.



## 3 “Junk” Drawer

It's not junk—it's just stuff that you don't know where else to keep. Devote a drawer to office-type supplies, and keep it from looking messy by fitting the whole drawer with square and rectangular metal-mesh boxes.

## 4 Specialty Supplies

From tiny icing tips to big bins of flour, baking tools and ingredients require varied storage solutions. Use plastic containers with compartments to corral small items. A deep drawer is good for flours and sugars, labeled on top.

### GET THE LOOK



Door-mount lid rack,  
\$8, [organize.com](http://organize.com).



Deluxe bamboo knife dock,  
\$49, [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com).



Pop food storage container,  
5.5-quart large square, by Oxo,  
\$20, [macys.com](http://macys.com).



## Don't hide it

Collections are meant to be admired, not banished behind cabinet doors. In the kitchen, keep your pottery and cookware where they can make a big visual impact while remaining accessible enough to use often.



### GET THE LOOK



**Porcelain utensil holder**  
cache pot, \$20, [crateandbarrel.com](http://crateandbarrel.com).



**Scrolled corbel**, by Martha Stewart Living,  
\$118 (special order), [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com).



**Washed seagrass basket**,  
\$10, [jaysonhome.com](http://jaysonhome.com).



**Kensington Whiteware Collection**,  
in Round, in White, by Martha  
Stewart Collection, \$39 for a 4-piece  
place setting, [macys.com](http://macys.com).

BRYAN GARDNER (WHITE KITCHEN), BURCU AVSAR (TEACUPS), PIETER ESTERSON (COPPER POTS), GENTL AND HYERS (WHITE PLATES), EMILY KATE ROEMER (CORBEL)







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GET THE LOOK



Custom Ox Hill kitchen island,  
by Martha Stewart Living, [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com).



Winthrop hotel rack wall-mounted shelf,  
\$40, [bedbathandbeyond.com](http://bedbathandbeyond.com).

## Install an island<sup>3</sup>

A generously sized island is—literally—the centerpiece of the kitchen, with plenty of room to prep, entertain, do homework, or hang out. An overhang on the island provides room for stools. Cabinets underneath are good for items you don't reach for regularly, like large platters, holiday dishes, and small appliances.



## Towel-bar pot rack

The slim metal bar built into this shelf is meant for towels, but with the addition of S hooks, it hangs pots and pans instead. Just be sure the shelf is anchored into the wall securely, with hardware that can accommodate the added weight. Where space is limited, as here, intersperse pans of different sizes, rather than arranging them in graduating order.



## BOTTLE BASE

*No one will guess that this sleek, modern wine rack is made of PVC pipe from a hardware store. The design is completely flexible, so you can create one to fit inside any shelf or cabinet—choose a spot with supports on both sides—and paint it to suit your own décor.*

### TOOLS AND MATERIALS

Hacksaw  
4-inch PVC pipe  
Sandpaper  
Acetone  
Indoor/outdoor all-purpose spray primer  
Spray paint  
Industrial-strength self-adhesive Velcro strips

### HOW-TO

1. Using hacksaw, cut lengths of pipe to fit the depth of your cabinet or shelf (or have it done at a hardware store).
2. Sand the cut edges smooth. Wipe the outside of the pipe with acetone to remove any oils, which would prevent the paint from adhering.
3. Spray pipes with primer; when dry, spray them with paint.
4. Once dry, join pipes to one another and to the base of your cabinet or shelf using Velcro strips. Then use Velcro strips to stabilize your configuration.

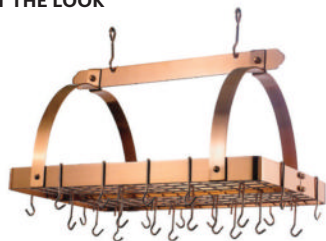


## Think up

If you make daily use of your pots and pans, as Martha does, take her cue and install a pot rack. Your collection of cookware will always be within arm's reach yet out of the way.



### GET THE LOOK



Satin copper pot rack with grid and 24 hooks, by Old Dutch, \$173, [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com).



J.K. Adams wall-mounted pot rack, in Gray, \$139, [crateandbarrel.com](http://crateandbarrel.com).



Copper Tri-Ply cookware (available in March), by Martha Stewart Collection, \$900 for a 10-piece set, [macys.com](http://macys.com).

BRUCE WOLF (KITCHEN)



# Good Things for kitchens



Use a loop of leather cord to hang utensils on S hooks.

## raise the bar

It's hard to come by storage solutions that are super-functional, streamlined, and also easy on the eyes. But this handmade wall-mounted system—created with painted dowels and inexpensive brass hardware—meets all those requirements. In the kitchen, it keeps towels, pot lids, and go-to utensils within reach (and provides a striking display).

### HOW-TO

Depending on how you plan to use each bar, choose either a hardwood or a steel **dowel** (steel is stronger, so better for heavy objects),  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch in diameter. Cut dowel to desired length with a **saw** (ours are 24 inches). **Paint** dowel. Let dry. **Screw** one **bracket** into place on wall (use plastic wall anchors, if needed). Place rod into first bracket, then into second. **Glue** each end to secure. Screw second bracket to wall. Hang items on dowels.

**Hardwood dowel**,  $\frac{5}{8}$ " x 48", by Alexandria Moulding, \$3, and **plain steel cold-rolled round dowel**,  $\frac{5}{8}$ " x 36", by Crown Bolt, \$11; [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com). **Multisurface satin acrylic craft paint**, by Martha Stewart Crafts, \$2 for 2 oz., [michaels.com](http://michaels.com). **Gooseneck brackets**, 2", \$4 for 2, [alanrichardtextiles.com](http://alanrichardtextiles.com).

For extra stability, add a little glue, like Liquid Nails, to each end of the dowel before placing it into the brackets.



## spice-jar reminder

Whenever you buy new spices, place a sticker on the bottom of each jar and mark it with the date of purchase. This helps you know when they are ready to be replenished, usually within one year (or sooner if the aroma has faded).



## slip-proof towels

Hanging a dish towel from an oven door makes sense—the heat from the oven dries it quickly. To keep the towel from slipping off (and allow it to be rotated so a dry section is always facing out), make it into a loop by attaching Velcro strips to two ends, one on the front and one on the back (left). Stitch in place, or use iron-on Velcro strips.

## Good Things for kitchens



### a new way to display

Transform a small collection of dinnerware into a mini art installation by arranging it on a shallow wall-mounted shelf. The display is both sleek and functional—and bright elastic can be a welcome update on acrylic plate stands. Before hanging, drill a hole on each side about one inch from the back and five inches up (or adjust the spacing so the holes line up with the centers of your plates). Thread elastic cord through the holes, and knot to keep it in place.

**Hyde open wall-mounted cabinet**, in White, \$200, [cb2.com](http://cb2.com). **Elastic cord** (#7415, color 41), \$3 a yd., [www.mokubany.com](http://www.mokubany.com).



### color-coding

Wooden cutting boards and utensils can do more than help prevent cross-contamination while cooking. Because wood is porous, it often absorbs the odors of strong-smelling foods—meaning last night's garlic could rub off on this morning's apple slices. You can sprinkle the cut side of a lemon with salt and then rub over the cutting board to deodorize it, but painting the ends of utensils and cutting boards lets you designate their use—vegetable, meat, or fruit. Tape around the area you'll be painting (avoid surfaces that will touch food), and apply one or two coats of acrylic paint.

**Multisurface satin acrylic craft paint**, in Lovebird, Green Olive, and Grey Wolf, by Martha Stewart Crafts, \$2 for 2 oz., [michaels.com](http://michaels.com).



### HOOK, LINE, AND SINKER

Chaos under your sink? Tame a crowd of spray bottles by installing a curtain rod across the cabinet. Suspend them by their spray triggers, and voilà! Freed-up space for other bathroom or kitchen essentials. A heavy-duty tension rod will work, but a screw-mounted option is best if you have many (or particularly heavy) bottles.

**In-Tension rod**, in Pewter, from \$25, [bedbathandbeyond.com](http://bedbathandbeyond.com).

## helping hands

Kids will be happier to pitch in with kitchen chores if they know where things go. Designate a low drawer for their dishes, and use dividers to keep plates and other vessels separate. To remind them what goes where, paint a silhouette of each type of dish in an eye-catching color, and then add a label with the name in each spot.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: KATE MATHIS, BURCU AVSAR, JONNY VALIANT, JOHNNY MILLER



# Ask Martha<sup>3</sup>

Storing recipes, keeping a freezer's contents orderly, and turning a stainless-steel refrigerator into your family's command center

## SORTING RECIPES

**Q:** *What is the best way to organize my recipes—a binder, a recipe box, or a computer program?*

**A:** There is more than one right way to organize your recipes, and the “best” way is determined by your personal preference. The key to organizing recipes is first to decide on a system that makes it easy for you to retrieve them, such as a box or a binder. More tech-savvy recipe collectors might scan recipe cards and clippings into a computer and then create a database. You could use free programs such as Dropbox ([dropbox.com](http://dropbox.com)) or Google Docs ([docs.google.com](http://docs.google.com)), which let you save and access your data from most gadgets with an Internet connection. Regardless of the system you decide to use, it helps to divide the recipes into categories that make the most sense to you. For example, you might have a collection of the basics, such as hors d'oeuvres, soups, vegetables, poultry, and desserts, along with other categories of recipes that you make the most: sandwiches, kids' meals, great buffet dishes. For physical systems such as recipe cards or binders, it also might be helpful to color-code the categories.

Be sure to keep your recipe collection clean and protected from food splatters and grease. It's a good idea to laminate your recipe cards or keep clippings in sheet protectors so you can wipe away messes easily. And keep tablets and laptops away from liquids to avoid costly accidents.

## ORGANIZING THE FREEZER

**Q:** *How can I keep track of what's inside my freezer?*

**A:** The key to keeping order in your freezer is knowing what exactly is going in and when exactly to take it out. Use freezer bags or containers marked with freezer labels (download ours at [marthastewart.com/freezer-labels](http://marthastewart.com/freezer-labels), and print onto weather-proof labels) so you can record the contents and freeze dates of everything you store. This makes cleaning out your freezer, which should happen four times a year, a breeze.

Depending on the food, it can be kept in the freezer from a month up to a year; after that, it should be thrown out. This will prevent overcrowding and view obstruction. Lastly, make sure you keep like foods together: red meat with red meat, sauce with sauce, and so on. It's much easier to find what you need if you don't have to rummage through every other food group on the way.

For additional ideas on how best to organize your freezer, you might read *Can I Freeze It?* by Susie Theodorou (Harper Collins, 2009).



With convenient labels, you'll never wonder whether those frozen raspberries are past their prime. Keep a stack handy in a kitchen drawer. Write the contents of the container on a label, and be sure to circle the date.

## MAGNETIZING THE REFRIGERATOR

**Q:** *Is it possible to post artwork, schedules, and pictures on my stainless steel refrigerator, even though it is not magnetized?*

**A:** The smooth, bare expanse of a gleaming new stainless steel refrigerator looks clean and modern and works in nearly any kitchen. The material, an alloy of steel designed to resist corrosion, may contain additional elements to increase its

strength and resiliency. But these added elements also can cancel out steel's magnetic properties, making it impossible for you to personalize it with reminders, your photos, and your kids' art projects.

There are a few ways around this. Simplest among them is to use one of the removable adhesive products available at office-supply and crafts stores (BlueStik is one brand). Hooks or clips that attach with small suction cups are another option. You can also look for Lulalu clips, notepads, and photo frames. These use an adhesive designed to grip smooth surfaces without

leaving residue behind. They can be attached and removed repeatedly.

If you miss your magnet collection, install a magnetic board in the kitchen or find one with suction cups and attach it to the refrigerator. Another option is to paint a wall with magnetic paint (one brand is Kling Magnetics) and use it rather than the fridge for postings.



**TUCKED IN**

*A built-in bookcase incorporated neatly behind a headboard makes use of the space between the bed and the wall, a perfect arrangement for anyone who loves to curl up with a good book.*

*With more storage than a nightstand (and less surface area to collect clutter), you'll find a place for other bedside essentials, such as an alarm clock and tissues. The wide top allows for easy placement of a reading lamp.*

# bedrooms



**THE BEDROOM IS YOUR SANCTUARY.** It's the room where you retreat and recharge, get dressed each morning, and unwind every night. Think of getting your bedroom organized as **A PRESENT TO YOURSELF:** Designate a home for everything—from an extra blanket to the novel you've been meaning to read—and you'll be **CLOSER TO A GOOD NIGHTS' SLEEP.**



Protect your skin.  
Protect your beauty.  
Protect your life.  
**IT'S THAT WORTH IT.**

I was 21 when I was diagnosed with skin cancer.  
It didn't seem like a big deal. But it happened  
*again, and again, and again.* Finally I  
got the drift and started to wear sunscreen.

It's not so simple with Melanoma. Melanoma is  
the *deadliest form of skin cancer*,  
and one of the most common among women  
under 40. I know, because I have a friend who  
was diagnosed with it at the age of 23.

I also support the Melanoma Research  
Alliance — the leading funder of cutting-edge  
melanoma research. *With your help, a  
cure may be within reach.*

Learn about how you can join me in a  
nationwide movement to prevent melanoma  
and support life-saving research by visiting  
**[itsthatworthit.org](http://itsthatworthit.org).**

*And remember to always wear  
your sunscreen! You won't  
be sorry!*

— DIANE KEATON

**Melanoma**  
**Research Alliance**

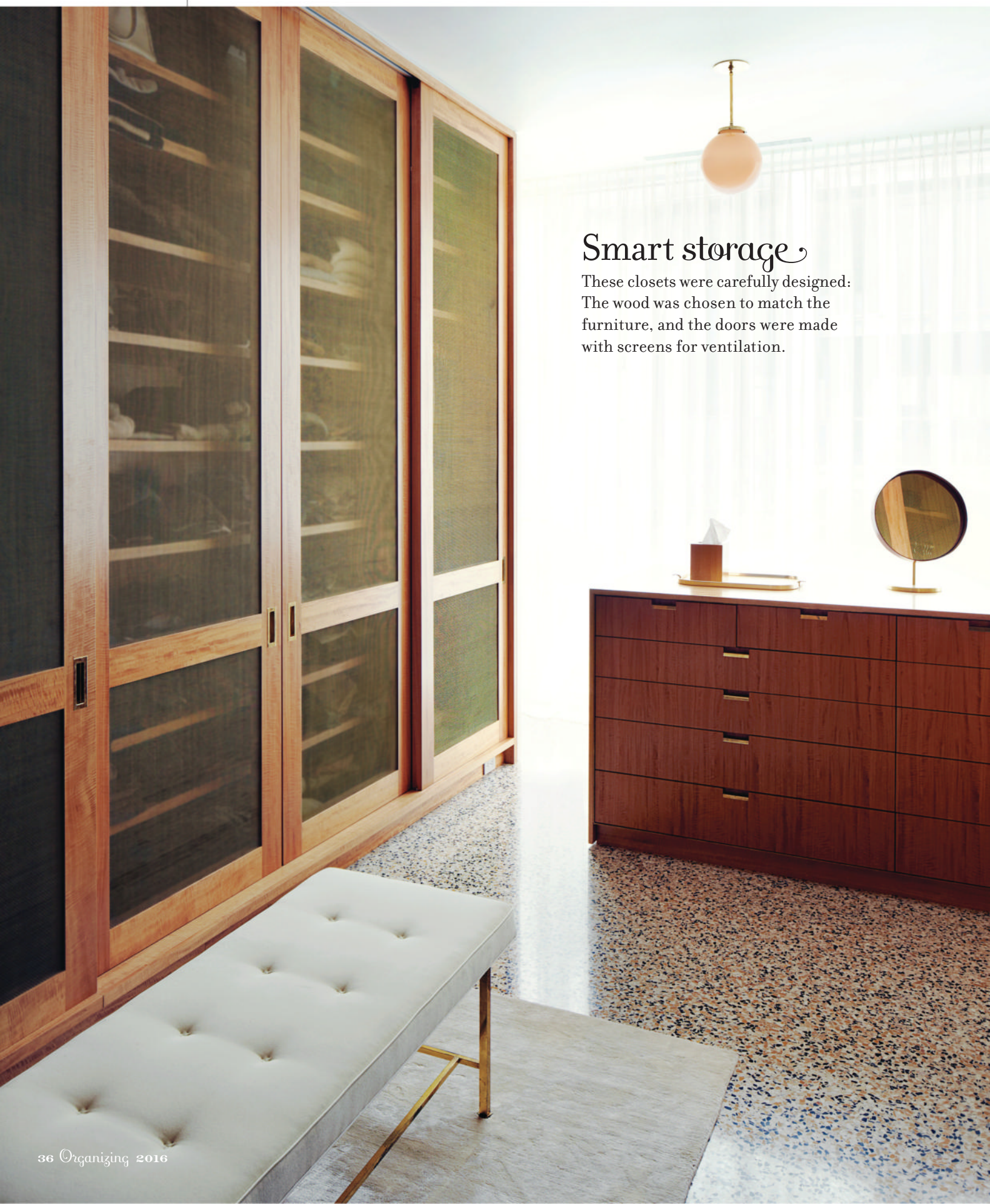
**[itsthatworthit.org](http://itsthatworthit.org)**  
**#itsthatworthit**





## Smart storage

These closets were carefully designed: The wood was chosen to match the furniture, and the doors were made with screens for ventilation.





# Bedside manner

For all but the most spartan sorts, a bedside table is a necessity. But you needn't limit yourself to an ordinary nightstand. A small dresser, desk, or set of nesting tables can serve as a splendid stand-in.



## Best Dressed

A small chest maximizes storage space next to the bed. Use the upper drawer to stow books and other night table items and lower drawers for extra bed linens. Just be sure to consider scale: Here, a larger bureau would overwhelm, but a low dresser looks right at home.

**Sofia dresser** (similar to shown), \$799, [potterybarn.com](http://potterybarn.com).



## Minimal Makeover

This modern take on the bedside table is pure minimalism. The translucent shelf provides stylish space for a lamp, a clock, and other sleep-time essentials. Metal brackets are mounted with hidden fasteners. The bottom of the thick glass shelf was professionally sandblasted and then painted pale blue to give it the appearance of milk glass.

## GET THE LOOK



**Artisan computer/writing desk**, \$319, [homedecorators.com](http://homedecorators.com).



**Oxford chest**, \$2,595, [jaysonhome.com](http://jaysonhome.com).



## Desk Set

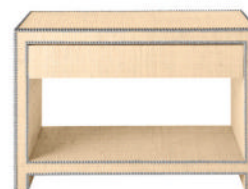
A desk with a bench is another excellent choice. Its large top is convenient for a few books or correspondence as well as for nighttime luxuries, such as a water pitcher and glasses. The padded bench slides underneath the desk when not in use.



## Nesting Instinct

A trio of nesting tables can be configured in several ways—drawn out, telescope-style, to increase surface area; collapsed into one neat stack; or even separated and moved around the room. A swing-arm, wall-mounted lamp frees up tabletop space, and light reflected from the mirrored surface helps brighten the room.

**Jonathan nesting side tables**, \$2,200, [mecox.com](http://mecox.com).



**Meade nightstand**, \$1,250, [wshome.com](http://wshome.com).



## Standing tall

If bed is where you live, make sure it's built for comfort—and for breakfast eating, Websurfing, crosswording, Netflix-watching. (Is there really anything worth doing that you can't do horizontally?) To create an invitingly rumpled and extra-functional haven, first splurge on fabulous sheets. Despite the hype—800-thread count! Pima! Egyptian!—the true test is which ones make you loathe the phrase “rise and shine” more than you already do.





## Boxed set

When planning a room's layout, don't limit yourself to floor space—think vertical and you'll greatly increase your storage opportunities. Hanging boxes (*below*), used here to house a sizable collection of magazines, were custom-made from medium-density fiberboard and painted light green to match the walls. A painted backing on each box blends in but allows for sturdy hanging hardware.



## Shelf turned bedside table

To save floor space and create a sense of airiness in a bedroom, use a bracketed shelf instead of a nightstand (*above*). We love the look of this reclaimed-wood plank supported by sturdy cast-metal brackets, but you can use any type of wood or a premade shelf as long as it fits the dimensions of your brackets. When hanging the brackets, make sure you use the proper anchor for your wall type. (If you're not sure, ask at a hardware store.)

**Ledge brackets**, 5½" depth, \$45 each, [rh.com](#). **Tokyo 1 small desk lamp**, in Black, by Misewell, \$345, [shopphorne.com](#).

### GET THE LOOK



**Ingrid 5-shelf bookcase**, in Rubbed Ivory, by Martha Stewart Living, \$449, [homedecorators.com](#).



**Double open cube**, unfinished, \$109, [gothiccabinetcraft.com](#).

## Make a stand<sup>3</sup>

It's not just cake that deserves to be put on a pedestal. Using dishes you already own and flea market finds, you can build footed

dishes in various styles that rise to many different occasions. To create a whimsical granny-chic pedestal stand, glue a tchotchke

to a gold-trimmed or floral-patterned dish, and then affix that dish to an upside-down teacup or bowl.



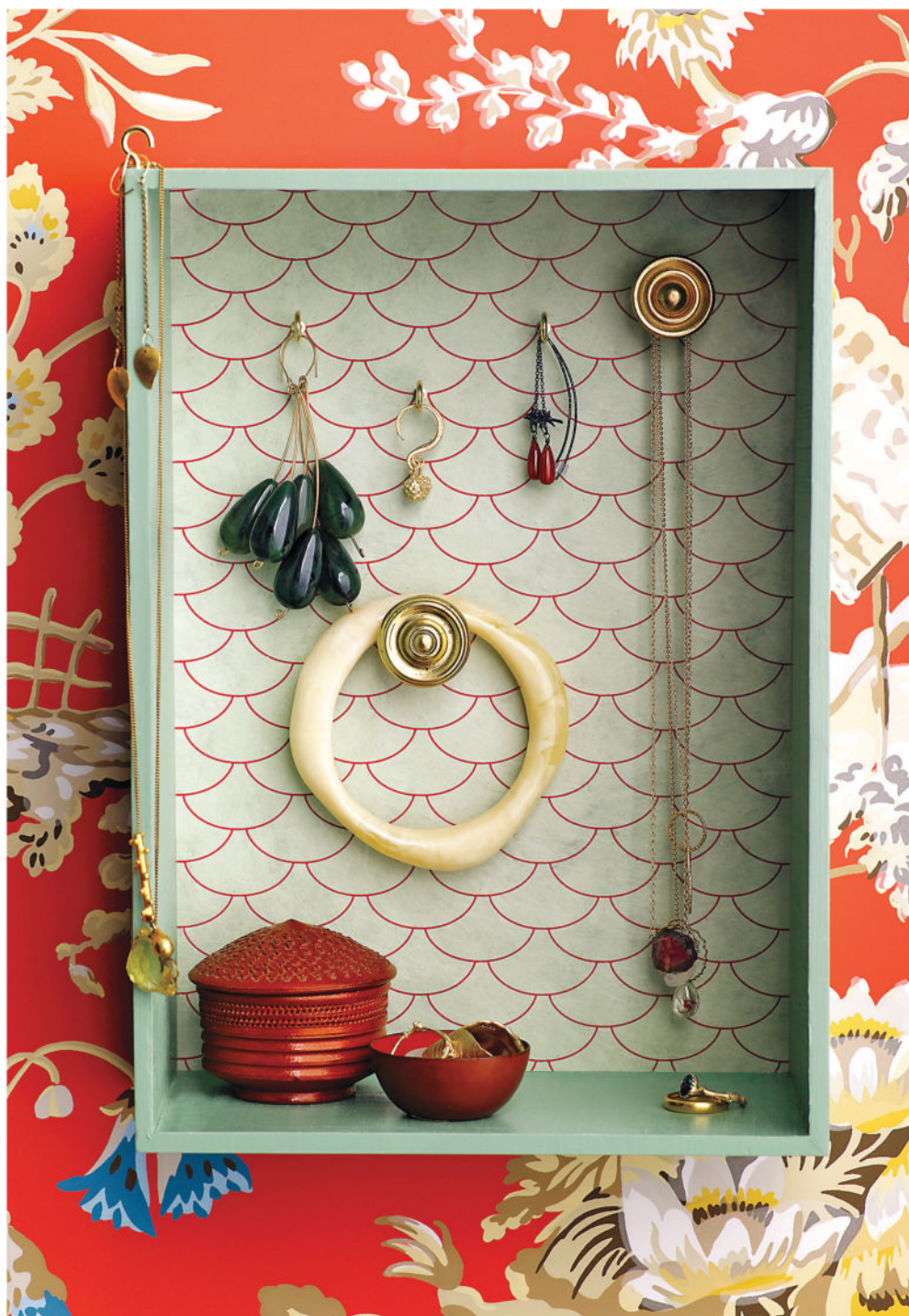
## Open-drawer policy

Let your hodgepodge of china collect something besides dust. Orphaned teacups and saucers are perfect vessels for sorting jewelry, and, when arranged in a velvet-lined drawer, they give you an easy-to-scan bird's-eye view of your bijoux. To set it up, measure the height of the drawer's side (not the front), then gather dishware that's slightly shorter. Line the drawer with velvet or felt to prevent rattling and sliding, then position the porcelain. Hook drop earrings on rims of cups, nestle necklaces within them, and stash chunkier beads and bangles on individual saucers.



FROM TOP: JOHNNY MILLER, JIM FRANCO





#### HOW-TO

Select a **shadow box** (or a small wine crate) with a back and sides that are at least  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch thick to accommodate the hooks. **Sand** and **prime** the box, then apply two coats of **semi-gloss spray paint**. Cut a piece of **decorative paper** to fit inside the box, coat the back of the paper with **spray adhesive**, and press it into place, smoothing it from the center out to the corners with your fingers. Then lay out the jewelry where you'd like it to hang, and screw in **hooks** at the appropriate points. Finally, add two evenly spaced **sawtooth hangers** to the box's back for a steady mount.

**Shadow box**, from \$12, [frames-direct.com](http://frames-direct.com). **Knobs** (similar to shown), from \$12 each, [berensonhardware.com](http://berensonhardware.com). **Painter's Touch Ultra Cover 2X spray paint**, \$4, [rustoleum.com](http://rustoleum.com).

## Boxing rings

If surface area in your bedroom is scarce, try a wall-mounted solution on for size. This jazzed-up shadow box, retro-fitted with a variety of hooks and knobs, shelters delicate earrings and chains from possible entanglements while turning them into *objets d'art*. Small decorative bowls perched on the box's lower ledge corral rings, pins, and brooches and complete the charming trinket tableau.

## Best of Drawers

Bureaus come in many styles, from traditional English to modern Scandinavian. But what's on the inside of this furniture is just as important. Here, a storage system for two chests of drawers that will keep their contents wrinkle free and easy to locate. For the how-tos, see page 45 (substitute the color scheme of your choice).



### GET THE LOOK



Colored glass table lamp, \$159,  
[westelm.com](http://westelm.com).



Handcrafted stoneware bowl,  
by Judy Jackson Stoneware,  
\$32, [food52.com](http://food52.com).



Zuma tray, in Orange, \$30,  
[crateandbarrel.com](http://crateandbarrel.com).



## ACCESSORIES ONLY

Small, streamlined bureaus can become overwhelmed by full wardrobes, but they're suitable for shoes, handbags, and other accessories. If you don't have the luxury of a second bureau, you can adapt any of the strategies demonstrated here to a top drawer in the chest of drawers you have.



### Loose Articles

*How it works:* Placing four rectangular boxes in the corners of the drawer results in seven cubbies.

*Storage tip:* Empty coins into a small dish each night so they don't clutter the top of the bureau.



### Handbags

*How it works:* A hand-made fold-up divider results in three separate compartments for purses.

*Storage tip:* Stuff handbags with acid-free tissue to protect their leather and help retain their form.



### Shoes

*How it works:* The same fold-up divider used above is paired with fragrant cedar planks.

*Storage tip:* Place shoes in cotton-flannel bags, toe to heel, to prevent crushing and scuff marks.



9-section adjustable twill drawer organizer, \$13, [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com).



### PERFECT FIT

To maximize storage, have precise measurements; a flexible tape measure is easier to maneuver than a metal one. Paper templates let you shop for different configurations of boxes.

## A PLACE FOR APPAREL

Bureaus traditionally have shallow drawers on top and deeper drawers on bottom. Small items, naturally, belong in more compact drawers, although frequency of use is also a factor (our off-season apparel is stashed in the lowest, hardest-to-reach drawer). Line drawers with acid-free paper or mat board to protect garments from snags.



### Loose Accessories

*How it works:* Café-curtain rods mounted inside this drawer provide a track for a tray to slide along, doubling the storage space.

*Storage tip:* For jewelry and other delicate items, line boxes with soft felt.



### Undergarments

*How it works:* These fabric-covered boxes in assorted sizes fit into the drawer, creating six cubbies for socks and underwear.

*Storage tip:* To help socks keep their elasticity, store them folded, not in balls.



### Shirts and Tops

*How it works:* A custom fold-up divider trisects the drawer; mat board lines the wooden bottom.

*Storage tip:* Fold laundered clothes when they're still warm from the dryer to minimize wrinkles.



### Seasonal Apparel

*How it works:* Cedar-plank liners repel moths; shelf brackets create topper-free compartments in which to put off-season apparel.

*Storage tip:* Always clean garments before storing for the season to prevent stains from setting.





### SLIDING TRAY (above)

If you decide to refinish the utensil trays, you'll also need spray paint.

#### TOOLS AND MATERIALS

- 2 utensil trays sized to fit your drawer
- Flexible tape measure
- Felt
- Scissors
- Curtain-rod brackets
- Screws
- Screwdriver
- 2 concealed-mount café-curtain rods

#### HOW-TO

1. Measure each compartment in the utensil trays with the flexible tape measure, and cut pieces of felt with scissors to fit inside.
2. Place 1 of the utensil trays on the bottom of the drawer.
3. Install curtain-rod brackets on one side of the drawer, about 1 inch above the top of the utensil tray. Repeat with second set of brackets on opposite side. Insert rods into the brackets.
4. Place the second utensil tray on top of the curtain rods.



### FOLD-UP DIVIDER (above)

#### TOOLS AND MATERIALS

- Flexible tape measure
- Craft knife
- Foam board
- Self-healing mat
- Ruler
- Book cloth
- Pencil
- Straightedge
- Acid-free glue
- Putty knife
- Bone folder

#### HOW-TO

1. Measure width, depth, and height of the drawer. Cut 5 pieces of foam board: 2 that are the size of the depth by the height, and 3 that are one-third of the width by the height.
2. Trim  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from a short side of each piece. Lay pieces end to end in alternating lengths on book cloth, with  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch between each piece; mark edges with pencil. Cut cloth so it's 1 inch larger than foam board on all sides. Trim corners at a 45-degree angle.
3. Apply glue to book cloth with putty knife. Place foam board back on book cloth, according to markings. Wrap cloth over foam board; glue down.
4. Fold divider into shape with bone folder.



### SHELF SEPARATORS (left)

#### TOOLS AND MATERIALS

- Flexible tape measure
- Pencil
- Pair of wooden shelf brackets sized to fit your drawer
- Screws
- Screwdriver

#### HOW-TO

1. Measure the width of your drawer and divide by 3. Mark the 2 points of the trisected drawer.
2. Place brackets in drawer, lining them up with the marks.
3. Fasten by screwing through the back of the drawer into each bracket.

## Good Things for bedrooms

### roll-out drawers

Make under-bed storage easier to reach by attaching casters to the bottoms of wooden boxes. Begin by screwing casters to the bottoms of plain painted boxes. Orphaned dresser drawers would work well, or you can make your own boxes or have a carpenter make them for you.

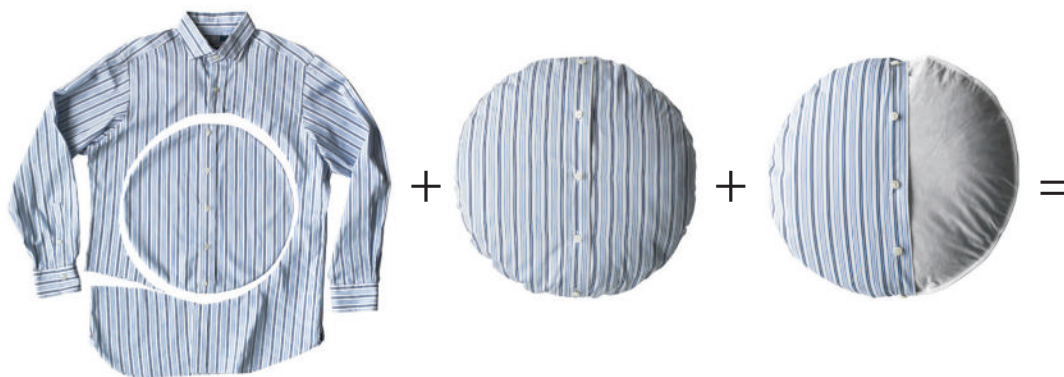


### brighter box spring

An organized bedroom starts, naturally, with the bed. If you want to dress up your bed but find dust ruffles a bit fussy, slip a fitted sheet over your box spring instead. Use a sheet that matches those on the bed for a streamlined look, or set off a coverlet by choosing one in a matching pattern or contrasting hue.

### smart pillow

Got some tired-looking throw pillows and a shirt with a case of ring-around-the-collar? Dress up your bed.



#### TOOLS AND MATERIALS

Pillow form or batting  
Iron  
Shirt  
Pen  
Scissors  
Needle  
Thread

#### HOW-TO

1. Place pillow form on an ironed, buttoned shirt. (If using batting, try a pizza pan to get a nice circle.) Trace the shape with a pen, and cut the fabric  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch outside your line.
2. With the outer panels facing each other, stitch all the way around—about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch inside the fabric edge.
3. Turn right-side out, and unbutton to insert your pillow form or stuff with batting. Then button back up. Your new pillowcase can be machine washed using the gentle cycle.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: ELLIE MILLER, RAYMOND HON (4), THOMAS LOOF



# Ask Martha

Deciding when to upgrade your mattress, laundering a down comforter, and getting a mattress to stay put

## WHEN TO REPLACE A MATTRESS

**Q:** *My husband and I disagree on whether we need to buy a new mattress. How often should a mattress be replaced?*

**A:** The rule of thumb is that a good-quality mattress will last anywhere between eight and 10 years. But because each person and each mattress is different, this is a very rough estimate. The quality of the mattress, how it is used and how often, and the effort you put into keeping it in good shape all combine to determine its lifespan. Obviously, if you sleep on a mattress every night, it will not last as long as one that is kept in a guest bedroom and slept on only occasionally.

If you also use your bed as a place to work, read, watch television, and so on, it will wear out even more quickly. A mattress that has a good number of coils (a queen-size mattress should have at least 375, with five turns per coil); tight quilting; and even, sturdy seams will withstand daily wear much better than a lower-quality product.

The telltale signs that it's time for a new mattress are hard to miss: If your bedding sags in spots or looks especially worn, if it feels bumpy or otherwise uncomfortable to lie on, and especially if it affects your sleep or leaves you in pain, then you should start shopping for a new one. Since you and your husband disagree about your mattress, the problem could be that you have different sleeping styles and therefore different ideas about what makes a comfortable bed. In general, people who sleep on their backs tend to prefer firmer mattresses, and those who sleep on their sides or stomachs favor softer ones. There are some steps you can take to customize your side. You might use a feather bed or egg-crate-type foam pad on top of your half of the mattress to add softness. Or, to make a sagging or too-soft mattress more firm, you could place a board (cut from a 1/2-inch-thick sheet of plywood) between the box spring and mattress on your side. Using a board is not an ideal solution for everyone; many people find that it makes a bed too hard. But to extend the life of your mattress a bit, it may be worth a try.

No matter what you do, the shape and weight of your body will cause your mattress to settle in certain spots over time. To help keep it in good shape for as long as possible, flip the mattress from top to bottom every four to six weeks. You also should rotate it at the same time. Avoid rough treatment—don't let kids use the bed as a trampoline—and if possible, take the mattress outside to air out in the sun once or twice a year. Finally, always use a mattress pad: It will add an additional protective layer between your body and the surface of the mattress and will help keep the mattress's fabric clean.



Using a cover and rotating regularly can extend your mattress's life. You'll know it's time to replace your mattress when it gives you a stiff back; it probably has lost its cushioning, and the springs have worn down.

## CARING FOR DOWN COMFORTERS

**Q:** *Can a down comforter be washed and dried at home?*

**A:** Washing a down comforter is not wise since the down could clump and the ticking could shrink and wrinkle, either of which might ruin the comforter. Furthermore, soap and water remove essential oils from feathers, diminishing their loft. Fortunately, with good day-to-day care, a comforter can last for at least several years.

Always keep the comforter in a duvet cover, which is like a big pillowcase with ties or buttons along the open end. A duvet cover looks good, and it also protects the comforter from dirt and dust. If a spill does reach the comforter, spot-clean it with a mild soap, like Woolite. Push as much down out of the way as possible so it doesn't get wet during washing; to prevent the down from becoming musty, let the comforter dry thoroughly in an airy spot.

When you get out of bed each morning, shake the comforter to restore the down's loft. Air it out regularly on dry, breezy days; this allows the down to circulate and removes trapped moisture. Down is very warm and insulating, but also light. Depending on your comforter and climate, it may be used year-round. If you store the comforter during the warmer months, keep it in a bag that isn't snug and lets air circulate; never encase it in plastic.

## KEEPING A MATTRESS IN PLACE

**Q:** *I am having a hard time keeping the mattress on my grandson's bed. How can I stop it from slipping?*

**A:** It is certainly frustrating to deal with a mattress that won't stay in place. If you're using a bed skirt, the synthetic materials often used in mattresses and bedding are likely to blame. These fibers, far smoother and glossier than cotton or linen, have little gripping power. So instead of holding onto the mattress, a bed skirt may be letting it slide.

To remedy this, you might need only to replace the bed skirt with one made entirely of cotton. If the mattress is still slipping, use an all-cotton mattress cover as well. (This is a good idea in any case: Cotton bedding is more easily cleaned than synthetic varieties, and the cover will protect against stains.) Look for a cover labeled "universal"; it will be elasticized all around the bottom and sides, instead of only on the edges. Since it wraps the entire mattress, it has a firmer grip than a standard cover.

Mattresses also can slide around if there is no headboard or footboard. If the changes to the bedding do not help, consider investing in a new bed, which should not only solve the problem but also may enhance the look of your grandson's bedroom.



**DIVIDE AND CONQUER**

*A his-and-hers closet uses a few smart, unexpected features. Oak-veneer cubbies are perfectly sized for folded sweaters and pressed shirts. Labeled wooden boxes slide into some of the cubbies to contain garment- and shoe-care items and toiletries. Open pull-out shelves make an accessible spot for footwear. Linen-wrapped Homasote fiberboard panels are mounted to the front of each door for a textured façade. (See page 50 for more.)*

# closets



It seems to be an unwritten law of nature: **THE AMOUNT OF STUFF WE OWN** inevitably accumulates to just beyond **THE CAPACITY OF OUR CLOSETS**. Since building a new closet is rarely an option without significant expense (and inconvenience), it's far easier to **MAXIMIZE THE USEFULNESS OF WHAT YOU ALREADY HAVE**.



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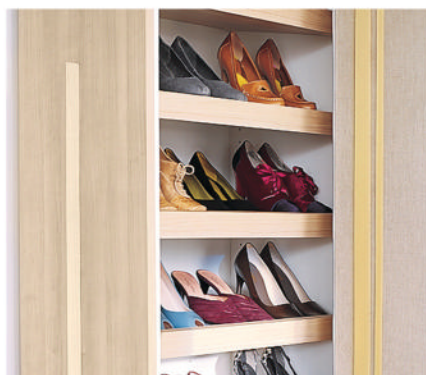
## Built for two

No one ever has enough closets, but a few unconventional ideas make the most of the space you have. Though this one is custom built, the same details can be incorporated into almost any closet.



### Designed Within Reach

On her side, a spring-loaded pull-down rack keeps clothes within easy reach.



### Kitchen Swap

A pull-out pantry moves out of the kitchen and into the closet; it works best for shoes when shelves are installed at an angle.



### Hidden Treasure

Divided trays become a two-tier jewelry organizer.

### HANGING CLOTHES

*Coats need broad wooden hangers to keep shoulders aligned and prevent misshapen garments. Silk blouses, cotton shirts, and vests need smaller but still well-shaped hangers to keep shoulders shapely and bodies of garments unwrinkled. Pants and jeans are best hung on hangers fitted with clips.*



COAT HANGER



SHIRT HANGER



CLIP HANGER

### SORTING SOCKS

A few organizational tricks will result in a tidier sock drawer. First, a drawer isn't necessarily the best place for socks; if your drawers are small, lining up plastic bins on a closet shelf may work better. If you do use a drawer, placing a sectioned plastic tray inside is an easy way to divide it. One idea is to sort socks by type (sports, casual, dress) and then place them in different compartments. Another smart way to stay organized is to start by buying several pairs of the exact same socks—they are easier to match, and with fewer choices, you won't spend as much time rummaging around in your drawer.





## Pile high club

Reaching for a sweater on a stacked-high shelf is like plucking an orange from the bottom of a supermarket produce pyramid: No matter how careful you are, you're likely to trigger an avalanche. An almost-invisible organizer gives discreet structural support to your wobbling winter woools.

Slide N Stack Organizer with Fold N Stax Dividers, \$11 for 6, [stacksandstacks.com](http://stacksandstacks.com).

*Each organizer comes with dividers that make it easier to fold sweaters neatly and to draw a sweater out of the middle.*

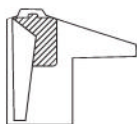
**1**

Place divider against back of sweater.



**2**

Fold the arms back and flat.



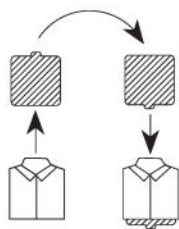
**3**

Fold the tail up at the bottom



**4**

Remove divider, and slide it between two folded sweaters.









# Room for it all

The efficient configuration of shelves and hanging racks in this custom-built closet neatly accommodates all the clothing and accessories. A center island provides extra drawer storage and an excellent surface for folding.



## Center Island Drawers

Drawers in the center island hold a vast collection of ties.



## Surge Protector

It's a good idea to establish an area for charging gadgets. A USB port is a bonus.



## Motion-Sensing Light

Stick-on battery-operated lights brighten small areas under the shelves; a mirror along the back shelf reflects the light into shadowy spots.



## Laundry Dry-Cleaning Sorter

A hinged laundry sorter keeps dirty clothes out of sight.

## GET THE LOOK



Revolve 3.4 surge protector with USB ports, \$19, [36oelectrical.com](http://36oelectrical.com).



LED puck lights, by Rite Lite, \$17 for a set of 3, [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com).



Tilt-out cabinet sorter, \$219, [homedecorators.com](http://homedecorators.com).



Cedar boot shapers, \$49 per pair, [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com).

How you arrange items is just as important as the architecture of the closet itself. Follow these strategies and you'll never again say, "I have nothing to wear!"

## HANG

Anything that is likely to wrinkle (linen, rayon, all-cotton shirts) or slide around in a drawer (silks and satins), as well as garments that are pressed or have pleats.

## FOLD

All knitwear, cotton T-shirts, casual pants, (jeans, khakis, corduroys), and sportswear (in a separate drawer).

## GROUP

Choose a grouping principle that makes sense to you—button-down shirts, sweaters—and then by color, from white to black.

## REVIEW

Every six months, review your wardrobe. Decide what you want to keep, what needs repair, and what should be given away or discarded.



## Open some doors

In the ideal linen closet, everything is visible. Everyday items are easy to reach, and seasonal items, such as baskets of beach towels, are on the top and bottom shelves. Drawers give delicate antique linens an extra level of protection. It saves time to group linens according to size and room they're used in; the stacks are spaced apart, which allows linens to breathe and allows you to find what you need easily. Zippered cloth-and-plastic bedding bags protect your blankets and quilts when not in use. Because the heaviest blankets spend so much time in the closet, the bags will keep them from getting dusty. The transparent plastic top makes it easy to identify the contents. Labels help you keep each item in its place.

### FOLDING A FITTED SHEET

*At last—a foolproof technique for folding a fitted sheet.*

**1** With the sheet inside out, place one hand in each of two adjacent corners.



**2** Bring your right hand to your left, and fold the corner in your right hand over the one in your left, so the corner on top is right-side out. Next, reach down and pick up the corner that is adjacent to the one that was in your right hand (it will be hanging in front), and fold it over the other two corners; this third corner will be inside out.

**3** Bring the last corner up, and fold it over the others so it is right-side out.



**4** Lay the sheet on a flat surface, and straighten it into shape.



**5** Fold two edges in, so all the elastic is hidden.

**6** Fold the strip of fabric into a rectangle.

**7** Continue folding until the rectangle is the size you want it to be.

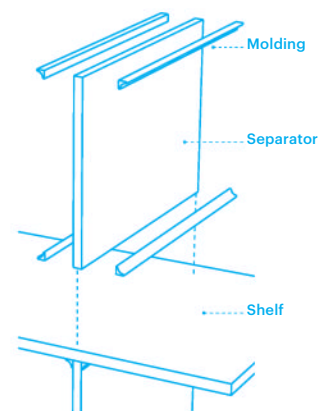




# A separate piece

Not all storage units are created equal. Case in point: Armoires may be useful for keeping sweaters or linens out of sight, but their wide shelves can lead to contents that, no matter how neatly folded, can topple over. Try adding do-it-yourself shelf separators to create nooks sized just right for your storage needs, whether a stack of pillowcases or a collection of quilts. Paint the resulting cubbies to coordinate with the exterior, as we did, and there's practically no reason to close the doors.

**Shaker style mini armoire**, unfinished (shown painted), \$439, [gothiccabinetcraft.com](http://gothiccabinetcraft.com). **Quick-dry towels**, by Martha Stewart Collection, from \$10 each, [macys.com](http://macys.com). **Green herringbone blanket**, \$231, [johnderian.com](http://johnderian.com).



## ARMOIRE SHELF SEPARATORS

### TOOLS AND MATERIALS

Plywood,  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch thick  
Fine sandpaper  
Paint and paintbrush (optional)  
Red oak cove molding,  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch  
Wood glue  
Brads,  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch

### HOW-TO

1. Determine number and placement of separators.
2. Cut plywood to height of space between shelves and depth of shelves. Lightly sand and paint, if desired; let dry.
3. To create channels for separators to slide into, cut 4 lengths of molding for each separator.
4. Place separators where desired. Mount molding on both sides of separator, as shown, and secure with wood glue and brads.

**Red oak cove molding**,  $\frac{3}{8}$ " by  $\frac{3}{8}$ " by 4', by House of Fara, \$3 each, [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com).







# Freestanding fixture

A self-contained, graceful armoire—painted and fit with sleek hardware—is a spacious counterpart to a built-in closet. This example is outfitted with shelving and drawer units to break up the interior into designated components.



## ADJUSTABLE FIT

A three-drawer cube with a walnut finish provides a place for scarves, jewelry, and other small items. It matches a set of adjustable shelves (*opposite page*), cut to the width of the armoire. Attached to hanging tracks, the height of the shelves is easily adjustable. Stackable, clear shoe boxes—some open-ended, some lidded—keep footwear organized yet visible; undergarments and socks are kept out of sight in the armoire's deep bottom drawer.

*Opposite page: Custom Elfa shelving, in White with Walnut Décor Fascia. Our Shoe Boxes, \$2 each, and premium stacking shoe bins, \$10 each, containerstore.com.*

## GET THE LOOK



Modular 2-drawer cube, in Espresso, \$47, [theorganizingstore.com](http://theorganizingstore.com).

## Closet cases

Do you have sparkly, see-through disco tops, or Sergio Valenté jeans that haven't fit in decades? You're not alone. Many people have hangers full of clothing that never see the light of day. But why? No matter how many of the following challenges hit home, remember that the ultimate goal isn't to toss every beloved thing from your closet. It's to understand why you're clinging to them, and then to adopt a strategy for moving on. That way, you make room for the life you are living right now.

### 1. "I MIGHT FIT INTO IT AGAIN SOMEDAY."

**EVIDENCE** Sets of tiny-sized clothes that you haven't fit into in years

**BACKSTORY** Extreme dieting and wishful thinking

**CASE STUDY** Shannon's history of "yo-yo" dieting is evident in the range of sizes she keeps, from her "skinny" clothes to her "safety" ones. Regardless of how much weight she loses, the size-6 pants serve as her barometer for feeling thin enough—even though she normally wears a size 10.

**STRATEGY** Holding on to unrealistic sizes does more than take up your closet space. Your self-esteem takes a hit every time you open the door to face clothes you can't wear. Instead of creating unrealistic expectations for dieting, get rid of the extreme sizes and dress the body you have now.

### 2. "BUT IT WAS SO EXPENSIVE!"

**EVIDENCE** A full-length designer gown from a benefit years ago, a pricey purse too small to be useful

**BACKSTORY** An emphasis on perceived value over actual value

**CASE STUDY** Diane hesitates to get rid of a pair of purple heels that she cannot walk in. She admits it was a misguided purchase. "I splurged on them 10 years ago, wore them once, then headed to the podiatrist."

**STRATEGY** Although you may think the item has value, it doesn't if it gets no use. Guilt often plays into this clinging behavior as well, so start by forgiving yourself for that past decision. Recognize the compulsion to spend more than you should on an item—and question what's at the root of it. As for the occasional bad investment? It may be a dream come true for a friend who shares your shoe size.

### 3. "I USED TO LOVE GOING CLUBBING!"

**EVIDENCE** Flashy sequined halter tops and '70s polyester dresses

**BACKSTORY** Nostalgia for the carefree bygone days

**CASE STUDY** Lisa is pretty good about purging her closet—with one exception. "I can't seem to toss the black spandex dress with the plastic midriff! I was so brave back then." This case of wardrobe-as-time-machine has caused her to carry this outfit from one apartment to the next for 20 years. And it's not making her any braver.

**STRATEGY** While keeping a few items as memorabilia is harmless, filling your closet with decades-old fashion will serve only to hold you back. Your closet should house your life wardrobe—who you are now, not who you were (or who you may be one day). Take a snapshot of those bygone outfits and keep the memories where they belong: in your photo album.

### 4. "I MIGHT GO BACK TO SKATING AGAIN."

**EVIDENCE** Outdated suits, pink ski-bunny outfit, ice-skating leg warmers

**BACKSTORY** A belief that the clothing itself will somehow prompt you to reengage in the given activity

**CASE STUDY** Joyce left her CEO position years ago to have children, yet she still has a closet full of power suits. Her wardrobe is more boardroom than playroom, making mornings frustrating and time-consuming. Even if she does make a career comeback someday, she'll need new work attire.

**STRATEGY** Unworn items won't in themselves cause you to revisit the activity. That's something you need to choose to do on your own. Keep one or two classic suits and donate the rest (check out Dress for Success, [dressforsuccess.org](http://dressforsuccess.org), a nonprofit that provides professional attire for disadvantaged women entering the work world). As for sport-specific apparel, if you haven't touched it in five years, you won't miss it. Bring it to a used sports equipment store (try Play It Again Sports, [playitagainsports.com](http://playitagainsports.com)), and get cash or credit toward newer clothes or equipment.

### 5. "AUNT MAGGIE GAVE IT TO ME."

**EVIDENCE** 1940s scarf collection, Grandma's hand-knit sweater that shrunk in the wash long ago

**BACKSTORY** A sense of obligation that forces you to keep something in memory of a friend or family member

**CASE STUDY** When Sue's favorite aunt, Maggie, moved to Florida, she endowed her with her coveted hat collection—which Sue has little room for. As a result, her already tight closet has become part heirloom museum and part vortex of knit caps. She never wears them and doesn't even like them. She just likes Aunt Maggie, so it's hard to let them go.

**STRATEGY** It's important not to confuse loving the item with loving the person who gave it to you. Letting go of the item doesn't mean you're letting go of the person. Keep one or two of your favorites, and share the others with family members to carry on the tradition. The key is to find a good home for the pieces. Your memories live in you, not in your stuff.

### 6. "IT'S IN FASHION RIGHT NOW. AT LEAST, IT WAS."

**EVIDENCE** Flash-in-the-pan trends, some ultra-unflattering, none of which fit your style or your body

**BACKSTORY** Fear of being old or out of the fashion loop

**CASE STUDY** Trend-hungry Helen keeps on buying clothes, even trolling her teenage daughter's closet to pilfer the latest looks. The problem? Her closet is packed with clothes she wears once or twice and never again. She somehow feels that if she dresses younger, she'll feel younger—and people will see her that way, too.

**STRATEGY** The challenge here is to find joy in your current stage of life. Deny it, and you may make choices that are inappropriate and unflattering. Avoid one-and-done outfits that will soon sink into disuse. Instead, opt for pieces you can wear in a variety of ways. If you start thinking about your closet as prime real estate, you will see that the items with staying power deserve the best location. The others get relocated.



# Good Things for closets



## neater folds

Folding clothes over a board is the best way to achieve uniform stacks. Here, an ordinary cutting board does the trick. A pull-out plywood shelf designed for folding clothes slides neatly back into place when not in use; it is attached beneath another shelf with under-mount glides (from a hardware store).



### DUST JACKETS

Twenty-inch cloth napkins (or same-size squares of fabric) become protective covers for coats and vests that don't need to be stored in garment bags. Each is pierced in the center and reinforced with a grommet to slide over a hanger.



## clothing fix-it kit

A business-card organizer (available at office-supply stores) can be repurposed into a button and thread holder to keep all the fixings for your clothes in one place. Label and slide spare buttons and thread samples into the compartments, and store them together for convenience.



## strapped in

Storing purses and handbags is a challenge. Here's one solution: Make the most of vertical closet space by repurposing a men's tie hanger. Hang purses on the pegs by their straps using both sides of the hanger to keep it balanced and alternating strap lengths to maintain a slim profile.

Cedar 42-peg tie hanger, \$25, [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com).

# Good Things for closets



all bundled up

There's something incredibly satisfying about opening up the linen closet to see not unholy chaos but color-coded bundles neatly tied in a bow. To keep bed linens organized, fold each set—pillowcases and top and fitted sheets—and wrap with a 1½-yard square of fabric inspired by Japanese *furoshiki*. Then, using like colors, coordinate the sets by room or by sheet size, and shelve them together. This method makes finding the linen set you need a snap.

long-term care

Clothes and accessories stored for a season or longer need protection from light, moisture, and insects. A box filled with acid-free tissue paper, assorted cedar inserts, and dried lavender makes it easy to prepare items as you put them away.



kitchen to closet

A pair of paper-towel holders mounted on the inside of one closet door organizes scarves or ties and keeps them wrinkle-free. A kitchen-utensil rail proves to be ideal for belts: Each gets its own S hook.





# Ask Martha

Keeping clothes like new in the closet, retaining that fresh-laundry smell in the linen closet, and figuring out the specs for your dream closet

## PROPER GARMENT BAGS

**Q:** *Is it safe to leave my freshly dry-cleaned clothes in plastic?*

**A:** Dry cleaners provide plastic garment bags so that your clothing will stay clean during the journey home. Although this covering protects against rain and dirt, it is not suitable for long-term storage. Plastic bags, as well as vinyl ones supplied by some retailers, can trap air, humidity, and other gases, which can cause discoloration known as fume fading. In general, most garments will be fine if left in the plastic for up to two weeks, but leather and fur should be removed immediately, according to the National Cleaners Association.

If you intend to store your dry-cleaned clothes (or other garments) for more than a month, consider placing them in unbleached muslin bags. These effectively guard against damage from dust, moths, and light and are suitable for all types of fabric, as well as leather and fur. To prevent rust stains, replace metal hangers with resin or wooden ones, and remove pins, which are sometimes used to attach dry-cleaning tags.

## PLANNING A CUSTOM CLOSET

**Q:** *I'm considering having a closet built. How do I determine the right size and configuration?*

**A:** Start by taking stock of your wardrobe. The guidelines in this chart should help you get a sense of how much space you'll need, but be sure to leave extra room for your wardrobe to grow. Keep in mind, too, that a winter wardrobe will likely take up more space.

VERTICAL SPACE PER CLOTHING CATEGORY	
Women's Blouses	30–36 inches
Women's Suit Jackets	32–42 inches
Dresses	48–66 inches
Skirts	34–44 inches
Men's Shirts	38–39 inches
Men's Suit Jackets	39–42 inches
Pants	46–42 inches (by cuff); 28–32 (folded)
Coats	46–66 inches
Jackets	40–44 inches
ROD SPACE (HORIZONTAL) PER ITEM	
Shirts and Blouses	1 inch
Pants and Skirts	1½ inches
Dresses, Suits, and Jackets	2–2½ inches

## FRESH-SMELLING LINENS

**Q:** *How can I keep my linens smelling fresh when storing them in a closet?*

**A:** Moist air and warm temperatures encourage mildew to grow on organic materials such as cotton or wool, resulting in musty linens. To prevent this, keep the linens in a cool, dry, and well-ventilated closet. If you must store them in a bathroom or similarly humid setting, wire shelving will help the items breathe. After a shower or bath, turn on an exhaust fan for at least 20 minutes to dehumidify the room. If you don't have a fan in your bathroom, try placing moisture-absorbing products, such as silica-gel packets, a bundle of chalk, or a box of baking soda, in the space with your linens. Another option: Install an incandescent lightbulb; the heat from the bulb will dry the air. If these measures still aren't enough, consider investing in a dehumidifier.

If moisture isn't the problem, and you're simply looking to maintain that just-laundered scent, try making homemade no-sew sachets filled with dried lavender, cloves, spearmint, or thyme, or cedar shavings. Put whichever of these fresheners you prefer into small cotton muslin bags ([mountainroseherbs.com](http://mountainroseherbs.com))—the type commonly used to mull spices and make tea. Once they're filled, cinch the bags closed and place one on each shelf of the closet. (As a bonus, every one of these natural ingredients is considered moth-repellent.)

Or for a quick store-bought solution, layer scented dryer sheets between towels and sheet sets. If you are sensitive to perfumes, place an opened box of dryer sheets in the closet, so the sheets aren't directly touching your linens. Replace the sheets or the box every few months, or when they are no longer fragrant. Alternatively, you can store an unlit scented candle or a bar of soap in the closet to keep everything fresh.



**SPACE SAVERS**

*Indispensable in the kitchen (for hanging pots) and the garage (for hanging tools), over-size Shooks are just as handy in the bathroom. They let you hang more towels than a single rod allows. Plus, we love how brass hooks pop against a bronze bar and a dark wall.*

**S hooks**, in Brass, \$40 for 6, [enclume.com](http://enclume.com). **Woven hamper**, \$165, [www.brookfarmgeneralstore.com](http://www.brookfarmgeneralstore.com). **Bistro towel bar**, in Oil-Rubbed Bronze, from \$79, [rh.com](http://rh.com).

# bathrooms



The day effectively **BEGINS AND ENDS IN THE BATHROOM**. Morning and night, people take part in routines that range **FROM THE MUNDANE TO THE SPALIKE**. A bathroom should not require too much of its users—**EVERYTHING ABOUT IT SHOULD BE EASY AND SENSIBLE**.



# YOUR STORY CAN CHANGE SOMEONE ELSE'S.



## **ADDICTION IS HOPELESS WITHOUT YOU**

Share your story of recovery or message of hope with someone who needs to hear it. Visit [drugfree.org](http://drugfree.org) and join the “Stories of Hope” community.



## Order in the Bathroom

On most days, the morning rush begins as soon as you wake up. Make it a little less hectic by creating a serene, clutter-free scene in the bathroom so you can get ready calmly and efficiently. A few clever storage solutions and design ideas can help tame towels, corral shampoos and conditioners, and clear away any disarray.



Tuck a stool beneath shelves for when you need to reach items placed up high.

### Baskets are Better If You Can Stack Them

Two stackable containers are superior to a single large container, which can often end up looking like one big junk bin. If you want to be able to see exactly what's inside, consider clear plastic shoe boxes.

**Sedona lidded rectangular tote**, \$25, [crateandbarrel.com](http://crateandbarrel.com).



### Take a Turntable for a Spin

That bottle of sunburn-soothing aloe you need only seasonally is likely sitting on a shelf in the back—way back. With a turntable, you can nab it easily.

**Single stainless-steel turntable**, \$20, [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com).



### Acrylic Liners for Easy Cleanup

Holding so many spill-prone liquids, bathroom shelves can get dirty fast. Line shelves with easy-to-clean sheets of Plexiglas. Another good idea: a container of DampRid, which absorbs moisture in the air.

**Plexiglas sheet**, 1/8" thickness (company will cut to your size), in Ivory, from \$3, [estreetplastics.com](http://estreetplastics.com).



### Get the Hang of It

Harried grown-ups and forgetful kids are more likely to hang up their towels if they don't have to fold them first. Hooks also happen to be great space-savers.

**FC polished stainless-steel ball-point hook**, from \$11, [simonsny.com](http://simonsny.com).



### This Is a Stickup

Store odds and ends, like bobby pins, safety pins, and hair ties, in containers that cling to a wall-mounted magnetic strip. This one is on the back of a closet shelf, but you could also install one on the back of a door or on the inside of a medicine cabinet.

**See & Store containers and strip**, \$13, [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com).





## Cart service

For storage-challenged bathrooms, consider bringing in a bar cart. It's a stylish option with a modest footprint. Plus, its wheels make it easy to move out of the way when you want to clean the floor.

**Parker Midcentury bar cart**, \$349, [westelm.com](#). **Paint** (on bar cart), in HC-38/Decatur Buff, from \$17 per qt., [benjaminmoore.com](#).

### ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

Where to put the extra towels, the spare toothbrushes, and the collection of nail polishes you've been amassing since the early aughts? There's a place for everything—well, at least most of it.

Weed out expired makeup and beauty products, and get rid of duplicates once a month. If there's no expiration date on a bottle, mark the date of purchase. As for bath towels, you really need only two for each member of the household—this allows one to be in rotation while the other's being laundered. After you declutter, arrange what's left, placing the products used most frequently on the shelves that are easiest to access. If you are lacking storage opportunities, utilize vertical space (think wall cabinets and over-the-door shelves). Bring in furniture pieces intended for other rooms. Bookshelves for instance, are narrow and work behind many bathroom doors.

### PREP IT FOR THE BATHROOM

*To make the cart stain resistant, paint it with a glossy paint.*



### GET THE LOOK



**Plush towels**, in Juniper, from \$12 each, and **Plush Squares cotton bath rug**, in Juniper, from \$24, by Martha Stewart Collection, [macys.com](#).



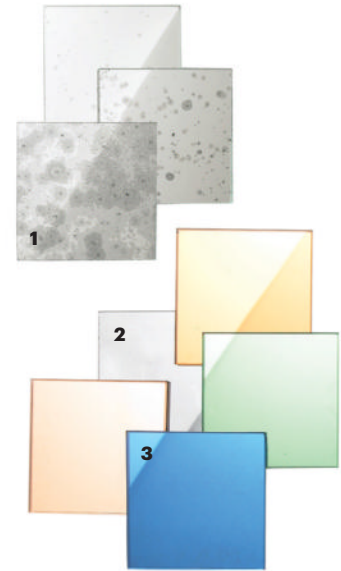
**PP bath stool**, \$13, [muji.com/us](#).



**Trimmed canvas storage box with lid**, from \$14, [homedecorators.com](#).

## Mirrors, mirrors

If your bathroom lacks built-in storage, you can install a water-resistant shelf below the sink. This is the perfect spot to store essentials, such as extra soap and cotton balls, organized on a silver tray, with the smaller items nestled in glass jars. Adding mirrors instantly brightens any bathroom.



### MIRROR 101

Mirror's ability to amplify light in a small space makes it one of the most powerful and affordable tools in decorating. And the options go way beyond clear. A glass store should be able to supply any of these alternatives.

#### 1 Antiqued

Coatings are applied to simulate the look of a mirror that's become tarnished over time with streaks, spatters, and fogging. Commercially produced versions come in set sizes, and the distressing is uniform. A wide range of effects, including mercury antiqued and silvered, can be done by hand.

#### 2 Smoked

To achieve the soft, moody look of smoked mirror, the finisher applies silver by hand, depositing it unevenly on the glass, giving the surface an aged effect.

#### 3 Tinted

Usually pricier than clear, colored mirror comes in several hues. Be courageous with color. If you like green, or have tile with some green in it, go for green mirror.





#### GET THE LOOK



Van Gogh Yellow,  
*finepaintsofeurope.com.*

## Let cabinets shine

Turn a nondescript wooden built-in into a focal point by painting it a gleaming vibrant hue. To keep glossy colors from looking “candy coated,” we recommend painting by hand. When high-gloss colors are rolled or sprayed, they can look lumpy or manufactured. You should see the human hand in it, the evidence of the bristles. (You’ll need to apply several coats.)

#### GET THE LOOK



Echo Collection cement encaustic tile  
(similar to shown), in Fez 928A,  
\$14 per sq. ft., *granadatile.com.*



Clipper Ship Blue, by Glidden,  
*homedepot.com.*



## Good Things for bathrooms



### wooden tub tray

A plank of beautifully knotted Douglas fir creates a naturally elegant tub tray. Cut a board—either reclaimed or store-bought—so that it's a few inches wider than your tub. Sand the wood, and seal it with a watertight finish. If you are worried about the board's sliding sideways, screw a scrap of wood to the underside at each end, just outside the tub's rim.



### all in one

For more orderly under-sink cabinets, store necessary cleaning supplies together in a plastic bin, and grab the whole kit whenever you need it. This way, you'll still have plenty of room for toilet paper and other items, even in a compact space.

### toiletry two-in-one

For an almost effortless update to your medicine cabinet or bathroom-sink-side storage, raid your kitchen. Take a wide-mouthed decanter, and then rest a small glass inside the jar's opening. You can store cotton balls in the jar and cotton swabs in the glass. Two of your WC necessities will be organized into one space-saving, stylish unit.



### easy upgrade

One shower curtain is fine, but two really get the job done. A pair of curtains has a fuller, more luxurious look and is an easy way to add style (or color, or pattern) to a plain bathroom. The duo also provide more coverage, doing a better job of keeping water inside the tub.

Petra shower curtains (similar to shown), in Cobalt, \$85 each, [johnrobshaw.com](http://johnrobshaw.com). Wire shopping basket (similar), \$28, [www.brookfarmgeneralstore.com](http://www.brookfarmgeneralstore.com).



## practical planters

There's no rule that limits you to standard accessories in the bath. Inexpensive ceramic planters, popular in the mid-20th century, abound at flea markets and online auction sites. Arrange essentials in a coordinated collection (first, gently clean them to remove mineral deposits and water stains). For a soap dish, fill one with beach pebbles, which will let water drain away.



## cool and collected

Less-than-attractive packaging and mismatched vessels often can clutter a bathroom. Instead, give myriad toiletries—cotton swabs, toothpaste, and hairbrushes—the appearance of a collection in coordinating, appropriately sized containers, such as blown-glass jars, old mustard crocks, Wedgwood cigarette boxes, or vases.



## decanted toiletries

*Living* editors employ this money-saving, clutter-containing trick for storing bathroom products: Buy economy-size staples, transfer some of their contents into smaller squeeze bottles, and label them for identification. Not only do the bottles fit into the medicine cabinet or shower caddy, but they're easier to lift than an extra-large bottle of mouthwash or shampoo.

**Flip-top leak-proof bottles** (similar to shown), by Nalgene, \$2 each, [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com).



## caddies stack

A smart solution for storage-starved bathrooms, tiered baskets meant for produce provide space for sundries. The vertical caddies are ideal for grouping necessities and keeping them in easy reach.

**White wire 3-basket Audrey storage** (similar to shown), \$60, [worldmarket.com](http://worldmarket.com). **Chatham lever-handle widespread faucet set**, \$649, [rh.com](http://rh.com). **Medium milking stool** (similar to shown), in White, \$330, [abchome.com](http://abchome.com).

## Ask Martha<sup>3</sup>

Regrouting floor tiles, cleaning a tub and shower from top to bottom, storing medicines safely, and more

### REMOVING GROUT

**Q:** *I would like to regROUT my bathroom floor tiles. What's the best way to remove the old grout?*

**A:** While tiles can last almost indefinitely, the grout anchoring them will need to be replaced eventually. Humidity, wear and tear, and time all do their damage. The grout may darken, grow damp and weak, chip away, and, if left unrepaired, cause the tiles to loosen. However, with the right equipment and a little time, you can remove it—and apply new grout—yourself.

You'll need a miniature rotary tool, which is like a small drill, with a grout-removal attachment (available at hardware stores), or a grout saw (available at tile and flooring suppliers). Both let you cut away the majority of the grout; any remaining bits can be carefully removed with a small chisel and gentle taps with a hammer. Either method will require you to be cautious and avoid contact with the tile. Soft, fragile tiles such as Saltillo or raw terra-cotta are susceptible to cracks and breaks, and you should avoid using a chisel near them; you may just have to leave a little of the old grout in place. In areas where the grout is so weakened that it is crumbling, you may be able to excavate it with a putty knife. Once the old grout is gone, use the round crevice-tool attachment on your vacuum to remove any dust, and wipe the edges of the tiles with a damp sponge.

Mix new grout with water, following the package instructions. Then use a foam or rubber grout float to spread the mixture over the tiles, pushing it into the areas between the tiles and spreading it evenly. If you are replacing the grout around only a couple of tiles, you can spread the grout into the joints with a toothbrush instead. Clean off excess right away with a damp sponge, and let dry for at least 24 hours.

### STORAGE SAFETY

**Q:** *What is the best place to store medications?*

**A:** Although it might seem counter-intuitive, the worst place to store medicine is usually the medicine cabinet. The buildup of heat and humidity in most bathrooms can cause medicines to lose their potency and expire before the expiration date. Unless you're taking a prescription medicine that will not be running a long course, store all medicines in a cool, dry spot. And keep all medicines out of children's reach; most medicine-bottle caps are child-resistant, not childproof.

It is usually not a good idea to transfer pills and tablets from their original bottles into other containers.

Doing so increases the chance of taking the wrong medicine at the wrong time, which can be very dangerous. And prudence dictates that you read the label every time you take a medicine. It's also smart to retain the printed instructions that come with over-the-counter medicines and prescription medicines. Those instructions provide expanded information about proper dosage, side effects, the medicine's composition, and dangerous interactions.

To dispose of expired medicine, mix it with something unpalatable, such as coffee grounds, seal in a container or bag, and throw out. For a list of drugs that can be flushed, search Disposal of Unused Drugs at [fda.gov](http://fda.gov).

### HANGING ART IN THE BATHROOM

**Q:** *I'd like to hang an antique print in my bathroom. Is there a way to safeguard it against moisture damage?*

**A:** With fluctuations in humidity and temperature, a bathroom is no place for your finest art. Moisture causes paper to swell, which can lead to buckling or wrinkling. It also increases the risk of mold and foxing, a term for spots caused by a type of chemical degradation. If the print is rare or of sentimental value, forgo the bathroom and hang it in a stable environment, such as a hallway or a powder room. Better yet, have a digital reproduction made on antique paper, and subject this to the elements.

If the print is inexpensive and worth the gamble, take it to a reputable framer. In skilled hands, the artwork can be protected to minimize damage. You might want to trade glass for Plexiglas, which is less prone to condensation buildup, says April Hann Lanford, of the Conservation Center, in Chicago, ([theconservationcenter.com](http://theconservationcenter.com)). The print should be set back from the glass, either with a thick mat or with spacers resting on the rabbet, or lip, of the frame. Lanford suggests encapsulating all the layers—backing board, mount board, art, mat or spacers, and Plexiglas—into a sealed unit by binding together the edges with archival tape.

As a final touch, attach rubber surface protectors to the paper backing to encourage air circulation behind the frame. Ventilation is also important. Open the window and run the fan for 15 to 20 minutes after bathing to air out the room.



## RENEWING PAINT-STAINED TILE

**Q:** *There are paint drips on my bathroom tiles. How can I safely remove them?*

**A:** Although it is nearly always preferable to clean up spills before they set, stains are an unfortunate fact of life. Removing the remnants of a messy paint job from the ceramic tile in your bathroom may be a challenging task, though likely not an impossible one.

Ceramic tile, which is defined as clay fired at red heat or hotter (and includes porcelain, which comprises about 40 percent of all tile that is manufactured), can be glazed or unglazed. Glazed tile has a shiny glasslike coating on the surface, making it less porous, and therefore more resistant to blemishes. Unglazed tile is more likely to absorb and, for this reason, is more difficult to keep mark-free. According to Dave Gobis, a technical consultant to the Ceramic Tile Institute of America, the appropriate cleaning method depends upon the presence or lack of a glaze and the texture of the exposed surface. With glazed tile, use a small amount of dish soap and plenty of water, wetting the surface before gently scraping off the

paint with a single-edge razor blade. The dish soap should provide loosening action and lubrication, but be careful not to scrape too vigorously because you could scratch the glaze, which is only several thousandths of an inch thick.

Unglazed or rough-textured tile should be scraped—dry—with a plastic utensil (hardware stores sell scrapers that work well). Remove as much paint as possible using this dry method; because unglazed tile is so porous, it is best not to introduce any liquid until absolutely necessary. For stubborn paint on unglazed tile, use a liquid cleaner; avoid oil-based soaps because they can cause discoloration.

Using a clean rag, apply a mixture of water and a pH-neutral, specially formulated tile cleaner, carefully dabbing at the spot. Do not rub with a broad wiping motion, as this will spread the paint. If the paint drip remains, it may be oil-based (latex paint is much easier to remove from tile). If you suspect that it is, try dabbing the drip with mineral spirits or charcoal lighter fluid (of course, make sure the room is well ventilated

so harmful fumes can escape). For larger surface areas—tile that has been painted entirely, for instance—consider purchasing a commercial cleaning product that is made especially for use on tile (available at home-supply stores). Never use vinegar, Gobis warns, or other acidic cleaners that may damage or scratch tile.

Once you purge your tile of paint drips, regular and proper cleaning is necessary to maintain the appearance of the ceramic and to prevent marring. Tile floors in high-traffic areas should be swept or vacuumed daily to remove dirt particles, and washed weekly with a nonacidic, nonabrasive liquid cleaner (always check labels before using). Make sure you don't wash ceramic with regular soap, as it will leave an unsightly film over time.

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## PRIVACY PANES

**Q:** *What are the options for making a bathroom window that faces my neighbor's property private?*

**A:** Replacing the entire window unit with one that has frosted glass will let daylight filter into the bathroom while keeping the room private. A window dealer in your area should be able to fabricate and install the new unit for you. You might ask the dealer to incorporate a louver into the window to help ventilate the bathroom. Keep in mind that if the window is positioned near a shower or bath, your building code may require that it be made of shatterproof glass, also known as safety glazing. This glass is available only in clear form, but you can apply a tinted film to it. Alternatively, you can install waterproof window treatments, such as metal blinds or vinyl shades.

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## CLEANING 101

**Q:** *What kinds of cleaners are best for a shower and tub?*

**A:** To clean the bathtub interior, use a sponge or cloth and a mild abrasive, such as Bon Ami. (Never use a brush inside the tub; it can damage the surface.) An acidic cleaner—like white vinegar or Lime-A-Way—will cut through soap scum. Wear gloves when cleaning with acid, and be sure to rinse well, since the residue can etch surfaces if left on too long. If you have a glass shower door, clean the track with an old toothbrush and mild dishwashing liquid. Wipe the door with a cloth dampened in white vinegar, then rinse and wipe dry with a clean cloth. A vinyl, nylon, cotton, or hemp shower liner can be machine-washed in hot water and mild detergent. Rehang the liner to dry.



**PRIMARY COLORS**

*In the playroom, bright wooden toys showcased on open shelving serve as a focal point. The corkboard backing and the cabinets were designed to be useful not just during the baby years but also as the children grow.*

Personalized name puzzles, in Primary, \$27, fatbraintoy.com.

# kids' rooms



It's a parenting inevitability: No matter how **NEAT AND ORGANIZED** you are, when children enter the picture, all bets are off. The best course of action? **LEARN TO EMBRACE THE SMALL STUFF.**



# "We saved enough energy to bring a new middle school off the drawing board."

Loudoun County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Edgar B. Hatrick



**NAME:** Loudoun County Public Schools, Virginia

**IMPROVING ENERGY PERFORMANCE BY:** Earning EPA's ENERGY STAR® certification for 46 schools

**SAVINGS:** More than \$40 million, plus a nearly 360,000 metric ton greenhouse gas emission reduction

**RESULTS:** Energy savings equaled cost of building their newest middle school

When Loudoun County Public Schools partnered with ENERGY STAR, the idea was to cut energy costs so the savings could go to a better use. In nineteen years, their savings equaled the cost of building a new middle school. Today, that school is a reality. And the energy they're saving reduces greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. Put ENERGY STAR to work for you at [energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov).









# Craft service

Kids can be more creative when they can find their supplies! Let cubbies help tame the colorful, glittery mess. For this crafting area, we mounted cubbies that can be arranged however you like and painted them in different hues to expedite cleanup (e.g., the blue bins go in the blue cube). We also created storage opportunities wherever we could—even on the exteriors of the boxes—and outfitted the interiors with customized organizers. (The proper hanging hardware will ensure a sturdy wall mount—ask at a hardware store if you're unsure what to use for your walls—but kids should be discouraged from climbing on them. For advice on how to anchor pieces to the wall, go to [marthastewart.com/wall-mounting-tips](http://marthastewart.com/wall-mounting-tips).)

Opposite page: **Open cubes** (similar to shown), unfinished, \$69 each, [gothiccabinetcraft.com](http://gothiccabinetcraft.com). **Mosaic rug**, in Bougainvillea Red, by Martha Stewart Rugs, from \$116, [safavieh.com](http://safavieh.com). **Orchard pouf**, \$69, and **Greater Pyramid blocks**, \$199, [landofnod.com](http://landofnod.com).

## 1

### Band Together.

Drill holes in the sides of the cubby, thread elastic diagonally through them—forming an X—and knot. Then tuck in toys and other odds and ends.

Elastic cord, 3 mm, \$4 per yd., [pacifictrimming.com](http://pacifictrimming.com).

## 2

### Put in Pegs.

With a rubber mallet, hammer dowel pins into holes drilled into the sides of the cubes. Use them to hang supplies or to hold up interior shelves.

## 3

### End the Paper Chase.

Make it easy for small hands to find and grab sheets of crafting papers by filing them in a plate-separator-cum-paper-sorter.

Maple rack, in Medium, \$7, [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com).

## 4

### Make It Colorful.

We painted the cubbies and accessories with a wash of two parts paint to one part water. To get clean, crisp lines (like the diagonal of pink), mark off areas with painters' tape.







## GET THE LOOK



Nursery Basics crib bumper, \$115, and skirt, \$55, in Tomato, and Ticking Stripe crib sheet, in Denim, \$36, [serenaandlily.com](http://serenaandlily.com).



Vintage airplane mobile, \$49, [rbbabyandchild.com](http://rbbabyandchild.com).



Bon Voyage suitcase set, in Pink/Peach, \$20 for a set of 3, [landofnod.com](http://landofnod.com).



Novelty print sheet set, in Twin, in Giraffe, by Whim by Martha Stewart Collection, \$50, [macys.com](http://macys.com).



## CONVERTIBLE KID'S STATION

Setting up a baby's room calls for strategic planning. This multipurpose bookcase is designed to grow with your child, from infancy to school-age years and beyond.



With basic carpentry skills and hardware-store staples, a tall, deep bookcase can become a diaper-changing station. Its lower shelves are replaced with an extra-deep one (left) to accommodate the changing pad. A diaper pail hides inside the canvas hamper underneath, and high shelves above store extra baby toiletries. When the changing-table shelf is lowered, the bookcase turns into a desk (bottom right); the original top shelves—once home to diapers and lotions—hold books and school supplies. The cloth hamper now stores toys.

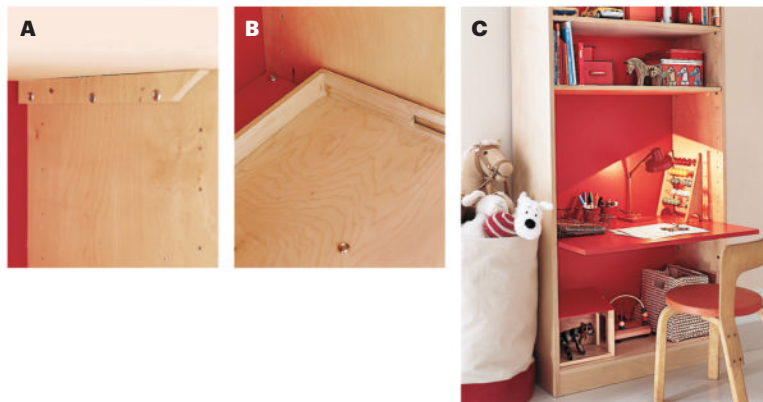
### HOW-TO

- 1.** Paint the inside back panel of a 32-by-84-by-16-inch unfinished **bookcase** in desired color; coat remaining parts with **Danish oil** (available at hardware and woodworking stores).
- 2.** For supports, cut front ends of two 15-inch-long 1 x 2 **boards** diagonally; coat with Danish oil. Screw to sides of bookcase 36 inches from the bottom using 1½-inch #8 **wood screws** with **finish washers** (A).
- 3.** Cut ¾-inch-thick furniture-grade **plywood** into a 24-inch-deep shelf; attach iron-on **veneer tape** to edges. Paint shelf. Predrill a pair of holes on each side ¾ inch from edge, placing them 1 inch and 14 inches from the back; lay shelf on supports and attach with screws through holes.
- 4.** Screw a 30-by-16-inch **wooden tray** to shelf (B). Add a contoured **changing pad**. Replace top two shelves.
- 5.** To convert to a desk (C), remove tray from shelf (fill holes with wood filler and repaint), move supports to 24 inches from the bottom, and reattach shelf.

### GET THE LOOK



Strawberry Red 2003-20,  
benjaminmoore.com.



## Bring things down to their level

Flung over the chair, stuffed behind the door, or left there on the floor where they landed: That's where kids keep their clothes. Shoes, baseball mitts, hair elastics? They generally go under the bed. You can help change this tendency toward untidiness, and foster positive lifelong habits, with an appealing, kid-size closet. Just a few simple, flexible additions—a store-bought bookshelf, for one—can expand the capabilities of your child's present closet.

### CUSTOMIZE STORAGE

First, employ a two-rod system. The lower rod allows small arms to reach shirts or jackets; the upper one holds next season's clothes. Stack sweaters, pants, and T-shirts on their own shelves so your child can find what he's looking for without rifling through every piece of clothing in a drawer. And what to do with belts and skate-boarding helmets? Use a peg board to hang them neatly on the wall, where they'll be in clear sight. With a variety of hooks and a few well-chosen containers, you can help things find their way back home, ready to go for the next day.





## 1 Hanging Stuff

Kids have very little to hang up, so the closet requires short rods only. To achieve that extra-neat appearance, use a single style of hanger (we chose inexpensive plastic) in just one or two colors.

Children's tubular hangers, \$1.50 for a pack of 5, [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com).

## 2 Storage Shelves

Bookshelves provide at-a-glance storage for pants, sweaters, and T-shirts. Use the bottom cubby to keep the backpack out from underfoot.

## 3 Peg Board

Paint the peg board a bright color to add a splash of energy to the inside of the closet. Affix it to the back wall of the closet with mounting hardware, and use simple hooks to dangle all manner of paraphernalia. Set the bookshelves in front of it, and anchor to the wall.

## 4 Bungees

Turn even the side of the shelves into storage and display with bungee cords (*below*). Drill  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch holes through the book-case, using the shelf's pre-cut peg holes. Cut off both bungee hooks. Knot one end of cord, thread through holes, pull tight, and knot again. Everything from postcards to action figures will find a place.



### Step

A low, two-drawer cube (*above*) provides ample storage for socks and undies. Plus kids can reach high-up things all by themselves.

### Lower Rod

To hang a lower rod (*right*), cut two pieces of strap webbing (each twice the length plus overlap). Wrap both straps over top rod, overlap ends on the bottom, and staplegun through all the layers.





## Show and tell

Exhibit a collection of children's artwork in a neat grid, and what once looked chaotic becomes instantly more charming (and inspiring). A crafts table with built-in storage ensures an endless supply of masterpieces.

### GET THE LOOK



Parker playtable—paper roll, \$895,  
by Ducduc, [2modern.com](http://2modern.com).



Grundtal flatware caddy,  
\$10, [ikea.com](http://ikea.com).



### EXTRA-LARGE ART DISPLAY

More is more when it comes to kids' creativity: They're prolific artists—and they work on a larger scale. (They would never settle for 8½-by-11-inch paper when 11-by-17-inch is on offer.) In the playroom at Martha's, a double-height bulletin board made from Homasote—an affordable fiberboard used for soundproofing—covered with fabric provides ample space for art by her grandchildren, Jude and Truman, as well as by visiting friends.

**Big Band rug**, from \$79, [landofnod.com](http://landofnod.com). **Easel**, \$169; **table with paper roll**, \$249, and **wide-open storage**, \$179, all in Cornbread, by Martha Stewart Living Kids Craft Space Collection, [homedecorators.com](http://homedecorators.com). Some artwork courtesy of the Washington Market School.



## CREATE A TRAVELING EXHIBIT

*To keep the board from getting overwhelmed by paper, periodically remove all the art and file it (or send some to loved ones). But first snap a photograph of the fully covered board to document the children's progress, phases, and favorites.*



## out of the kitchen

In a nursery, a row of shallow-depth kitchen cabinets offers kid-level storage while leaving plenty of room for play. Here, the unfinished cabinets were painted yellow, placed on a wooden base, and then topped with a single piece of wood that was cut to fit and painted white. A large bulletin board displays keepsakes and mementos. To make your own board, have a piece of Homasote fiberboard cut to size at a home-supply store, and stretch a length of linen over it, stapling it in place on the back, one side at a time.

Ivar cabinet, unfinished (shown painted), \$50, [ikea.com](http://ikea.com).

### GET THE LOOK



Medium burlap message board, \$99, [ballarddesigns.com](http://ballarddesigns.com).



3-Bin Storagepalooza, in Azure, \$199, [landofnod.com](http://landofnod.com).

## Hide and seek

A slender open-storage cabinet is equipped with easy-to-reach baskets that contain and conceal toys. An oilcloth fabric, here in a playful polka-dot pattern, is a cinch to wipe clean; arranging uniformly framed prints (these are pages from a book) in an orderly fashion gives the space a more pulled-together look.



You can't keep your little ones from growing up too fast, but by filling a box with birthday-party mementos, you can hold on to significant moments in time. Buy an acid-free photo-storage box (available at art-supply stores) to preserve photos and birthday cards, snippets of wrapping paper and ribbon, candles, invitations, and more.



As each school year flies by, a cloud of papers is left in its wake. With memory books, you can archive a child's academic progress, from her first attempts at handwriting to her best book report. Use binders with clear sleeves and a clear cover; label each with the grade and the school photo from that year. Fill with papers, artwork, report cards, and awards.

## A unified front

Open-plan living can look sleek and streamlined, but encroaching toys will quickly upset the balance. Solve the problem with painted wooden crates in shades that compliment your color scheme. Add labels for each type of toy, and then display the bins on a steel-shelving unit. To replicate the look, buy containers in the same color family and attach similar labels.

Safco steel shelving, 75" by 36" by 12", \$180, staples.com.

### GET THE LOOK



Fabric drawer, \$7, by Martha Stewart Living, homedepot.com.

JONNY VALIANT (TOP)



# Good Things for kids' rooms



## up we grow

It's an heirloom/time capsule for a family on the move: a portable growth chart that can withstand relocation (or renovation). Simply repurpose a wooden closet rod, whitewash it, and then assign each family member a different color paint to mark his or her height year after year.

*Wooden rods are commonly sold in eight-foot lengths; consider trimming yours to a more manageable height before you begin.*

### TOOLS AND MATERIALS

Drill (with bit to match finial screw)  
Wooden dowel rod, 1½-inch diameter, cut to desired length  
Unfinished screw-in wooden finial  
Acrylic craft paint in white, plus colors of your choice  
Paintbrush  
Painters' tape  
Permanent marker

### HOW-TO

1. With drill, make pilot hole in one end of the rod; screw in finial. Paint dowel and finial with diluted white acrylic paint. Let dry.
2. Have family member stand up straight, with the dowel at his back. Use a pencil to mark his height.



3. With painters' tape, mask off a ½-inch section of dowel above the mark you just made. Use acrylic paint to fill in the stripe (give each family member a color). Let dry; remove tape.

4. Write in the name and date on the stripe in permanent marker. Repeat annually (at least).

**Multi-surface satin acrylic paint**, in Blue Sky, Wedding Cake, and Wild Salmon, by Martha Stewart Crafts, \$2 for 2 oz., [michaels.com](http://michaels.com).

## stick to it

When the school year ends, put your children's artwork on display in an at-home gallery. Just frame the pieces with painters' tape, which comes in a variety of widths and colors. Plus, it's low-tack—so you can peel it off whenever you're ready to showcase a new set of masterpieces.



## color-coded kids' stuff

Cut down on confusion (and bickering) when kids wash up in the morning and at bedtime: Assign each child a color, and then get toothbrushes, towel sets, and water cups to match.



## Good Things for kids' rooms



### double duty

We know better than to promise any miracles, but affixing inexpensive CD crates to the sides of your child's dresser just might make tidying up your kid's room less of a chore. (The accessible stow-and-go storage may even get the kids on board themselves.) To get the seamless look, paint the crates to match your child's dresser. Then remove the dresser drawers and drill holes from the inside that line up with the four corners of the crate's side. Secure each crate with nuts and bolts. Be sure to position crates in a way to avoid unbalanced weight, especially if the dresser is light, and to use anti-tip hardware.

### LET THEM WRITE ON THE WALLS

Leave notes or reminders for each other, or simply give kids a space to doodle, instantaneously on display, on dry-erase cloud decals.

Dry-erase airplanes and clouds, by Martha Stewart Wall Art Decals, \$50, [fathead.com](http://fathead.com).



### back-to-school binder

Finally: a scrapbook that practically makes itself. Keep your kids' school mementos—report cards, class pictures, special projects—in clear plastic binder sleeves. Download our fill-in-the-blank kindergarten-through-sixth-grade templates at [marthastewart.com/binder](http://marthastewart.com/binder), and arrange the book year by year.



### labels, labels, everywhere

What child doesn't like seeing his name in print? Identify all his things using a personalized rubber stamp and permanent-ink pad or one made for fabric. At left, clockwise from top: Stamp the name onto iron-on fabric tape, then affix it to the inside of clothing; use ribbons as bookmarks or tags; mark pencils and other school supplies; and stamp onto shoelaces. If the name will show, protect your child by using pale ink and small type.



# Ask Martha<sup>3</sup>

Preserving a crib and beloved stuffed animals for future generations and determining which documents to keep for your children

## STORING A CRIB

**Q:** *How can I preserve the oak baby crib that was used by my two sons for my grandchildren-to-be?*

**A:** If you have the space, keep the crib assembled for storage. Over the years, wood can warp, and the piece might not fit together well when reassembled.

Begin by tightening loose screws and joints, then dust the crib with a dry cloth. Humidity causes nails and screws to rust and stain the wood. To slow oxidation, apply wax to the hardware. A micro-crystalline wax, available through museum-supply catalogs, works well; clear paste wax, available at hardware stores, also does the job. Rub the wax onto the hardware with a cloth, let it set for about an hour, and then buff it.

The wood can also be protected with wax if it has a clear finish. (If it is painted, it should be left alone.) Use a clear paste, and apply the wax just as you applied it to the hardware.

Wood furniture should be stored in an area of the house with few fluctuations in humidity and temperature. Avoid placing the crib in a basement, attic, or shed; an interior closet is probably best. Before putting the crib away, cover it with a clean sheet to prevent exposure to dust and light, which can cause fading. Every couple of years, check on the crib; if you find any problems, you'll have the opportunity then to fix them before they become worse.



## IMPORTANT PAPERS

**Q:** *Which of my children's records should I hold on to, and where should I keep them?*

**A:** Babies don't come with owner's manuals, but they sure come with plenty of paperwork. A child's birth certificate and Social Security card are probably the first two documents he will receive; because they establish identity and citizenship, they (as well as a passport, if you choose to obtain one for your baby) are also the most important. Store them alongside your own essential papers in a spot that is both secure and convenient, such as a fire-proof box or a locked cabinet in your home office.

Vaccination records (these are often required for kids entering college, so don't discard them) and adoption papers should be similarly safeguarded, since replacing them can be difficult, and you may need to refer to them on short notice. If you prefer the security of a bank's safe-deposit box, make photocopies of the documents you keep there for reference when you're at home.

Other papers—school, day-care, and medical-insurance records; your children's own banking or financial statements (including savings bonds, which can be replaced as long as you have the serial number); and even warranties for baby products, along with the original receipts—can be filed in the same cabinet as your other household documents or kept in their own storage boxes in an accessible location in your home.

## SAVING STUFFED ANIMALS

**Q:** *Over the years, my children have received many lovely stuffed animals as gifts. The kids are getting older now, but I'd like to keep these toys for their children. What is the best way to preserve them?*

**A:** Ironically, the greatest risk to a stuffed toy is the very thing it's intended for—lots of handling. Dirt, skin oil, and general rough treatment will cause deterioration. Therefore, the simple act of storing these toys will help to preserve them. But they must be stored properly. Keep them where they will not accumulate dust or be exposed to sunlight, which will fade colors. Rapid temperature changes or excessive humidity also will do them in.

Before putting stuffed toys away, make sure they are clean. Wash them according to label instructions; if a toy has no label or is particularly delicate, just dab it gently with a moistened cloth and a mild soap solution. Blot well with a clean, damp cloth to remove all traces of soap. Let air-dry completely, then wrap in acid-free tissue paper (available at dry-cleaning supply stores). Pack loosely in boxes or ventilated plastic bins with a few cedar blocks to repel moths, and then store in a moderately cool, dry place; an interior closet is a better choice than attics or basements, which are subject to damaging heat and moisture.



**MODERN MARVEL**

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*It's been tidying offices for decades.*

*The nooks and crannies will hold everything from gym locks to sunglasses.*

Uten.Silo I, in White, \$490, [vitra.com](http://vitra.com). PS cabinet, \$99, [ikea.com](http://ikea.com). 2D:3D letter holder, in Fire Engine Red, \$39, [bludot.com](http://bludot.com).

# home offices



**ALL OF US WORK FROM HOME**, in one capacity or another. For some, this means telecommuting one or two days a week; for others, it's the **EVERYDAY BUSINESS OF RUNNING A FAMILY**. Whether your work takes the form of creating spreadsheets or scrapbooks, writing a personal blog or logging the household budget, **IT'S BEST DONE IN A DEDICATED PLACE.**

JOHNNY MILLER



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If you've always wanted the intoxicating scent of Lilacs in your garden but didn't have room for them, take a close look at this new addition to the Bloomerang® family of reblooming Lilacs. Its upright, bushy form reaches just 4-5' tall, and its dainty spikes of reddish purple buds open to intensely fragrant, soft pink flowers. 'Pink Perfume' blooms heavily in May and, after a short rest, flowers again intermittently until fall.

Ships in a 1 gallon pot in spring 2016 at the proper planting time for your hardiness zone. Recommended for zones 4-7S/8W.

**Item MM067629, \$29.95 each plus shipping.**



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Welcome butterflies to your yard and enjoy colorful blooms all summer long with this delightful combination of butterfly magnets for a sunny location. Butterflies and other pollinators will love the violet-blue spires of Agastache 'Blue Boa' from summer to frost. Coleus 'Dipt in Wine' adds a layer of colorful contrast while the blossoms of Lantana Landmark™ Citrus, Calibrachoa Can-Can® Peach, and Verbena Superbena® Lilac Blue give this pollinator feast a festive flair.

We ship 1 of each plant, 5 plants total, in 1 pint pots in spring 2016 at the proper planting time for your hardiness zone.

**Item MM087238, \$39 each plus shipping.**



## De-stress your desk

Create an office that works—at home or at your job. Here's how to set up a space that maximizes your efficiency and sense of order, whether you have a dedicated desk, pay bills from a corner of the kitchen counter, or take your tasks out in the world with you.

**Basis desk**, in Solid Walnut, \$1,349, [roomandboard.com](http://roomandboard.com). **Stockholm document box** (under laptop), in Grey, by Bigso, \$13, [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com).

Desk clutter can be overwhelming, to be sure. Take charge, and it doesn't have to be.

Start with the surfaces. What's taking up precious real estate that you don't need or even use regularly?

Try removing everything and putting back only the must-haves, such as your pens and a pad of paper. Take a fresh look at the tchotchkes and photographs—even the container you keep your pens in. If you no longer like them, share them with people who could use them.



Look beyond your desktop. Go through each shelf and drawer in your office and remove everything that you don't absolutely need.

This includes old files you haven't looked at in years; half-done projects you've lost interest in; and books you never read and don't plan on reading.



Keeping supplies within reach saves time—no more minutes lost to digging for a stamp.

Elevating your laptop is better for your neck and back. (The box is the exact width of this laptop.)

Pack your bag wisely and have a mobile command center.





### Create Zones

Piles visually aid your memory. Dividing a desk into zones reminds you how much you actually have to do. The number of zones can vary depending on your needs, but two reliable zones are “to do” and “in progress.” Some people work optimally with less clutter. In that case, stow work in files or boxes.

**Stockholm letter boxes**, in Navy and Grey, by Bigso, \$10 each, [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com).



### Stop Rummaging

Consider how much time you spend looking for lost or misplaced items—it’s probably even more than you think. Do you need a more compelling reason to keep all your most needed desk supplies within reach when you’re working?

**Brass pencil holder** (similar to shown), \$125, by Ferm Living, [cleverspaces.com](http://cleverspaces.com).



### Manage the Minutiae

Use colors to assign immediacy (as in “do today”) or categories (“personal”) and then apply them to folders or paperwork. You can use Post-it notes, stickers, or washi tape. If you share a work space or files at home, assign a color to each family member.

You do need to hold on to some paperwork: bank statements (only what you need for tax purposes); bills (one year’s worth); credit-card records (seven years); pay stubs (one year; then shred once you’ve received your W-2 form); tax returns and records (seven years).



Consider reducing paper overload by digitally scanning and storing important documents, which ensures that they’re accessible and safe (and out of the way). Check out [siftsort.com](http://siftsort.com), just one of a few companies that digitize your important documents and give you easy online access.

### GET THE LOOK



**1-inch binders**, by Office by Martha Stewart, from \$6 each, [staples.com](http://staples.com).



**Wooden desk accessories**, by Singih Kartono, from \$20 each, [aplusrstore.com](http://aplusrstore.com).



**Birger 2-drawer chest**, by Bigso, \$26, [staples.com](http://staples.com).



**Codify pencil holder**, \$48, [anthropologie.com](http://anthropologie.com).



**Classic desktop file**, in Red, by Semikolon, \$30, [uloffice.com](http://uloffice.com).

## Turning clutter into calm

When he moved in to his apartment, stylist Scott Horne entered into a classic design conundrum: how to make the most of a very awkward space. The built-in "office" adjacent to his kitchen was a half step up from dorm-room milk crates, jury-rigged from plywood shelves and a shallow desktop. Lacking inspiration, he soon let it become a dumping ground for papers, supplies, and magazines. "The idea of fixing it felt overwhelming," Scott says. "I needed someone to take the wheel." Which is exactly what *Martha Stewart Living* did. Since the area shares upper cabinets with the kitchen, it needed to look like an extension, not an afterthought. We set about unifying the space with an acrylic desktop to match the kitchen's glossy Ikea cabinets, a few bursts of yellow, and an exhaustive organizing system that's user-friendly—no matter how exhausted Scott is at the end of the day.

BEFORE



AFTER



### THE WHITE STRIPES

*Martha Stewart Living* editors gave the built-in a simple and super-affordable face-lift by ironing white melamine edge banding onto the raw facing of the cubbies. An acrylic top cut to fit the existing base finishes it.

Iron-on-edge melamine, in White, \$6 for 3/4"-by-25' roll, [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com). Custom-cut acrylic desktop, [tkmna.com](http://tkmna.com).





### Desk

A sleek laptop and a small task lamp free up valuable desk space. A steel wall pocket screwed to the wall serves as an inbox for those act-on-A.S.A.P. files, bills, and R.S.V.P.s.

**V-Light adjustable halogen desk lamp** (similar to shown), in Black Chrome, \$56, staples.com. **Magazine pocket**, in White, \$20, seejanework.com.



### Storage

Clearly marked storage boxes stash files that don't need to be referred to often. Handled plastic bins are great for extra supplies.

**Signature 3-ring binders** (similar to shown), \$14 each, russellandhazel.com. **Clear-handled storage baskets**, from \$4 each, containerstore.com.



### Electronics

A hardware-store roller blind retracts to expose the neat arrangement: Cup hooks on the underside of the desktop hold trays of paper. An acrylic riser elevates the modem and lets air circulate beneath it.

**Room-darkening vinyl roller shade**, in White, from \$10, homedepot.com. **Edison stacking letter trays** (similar to shown), \$15 each; and **acrylic riser**, from \$4; containerstore.com.



### Everyday Supplies

Various acrylic trays and containers keep supplies within reach. The homemade pinboard displays daily reminders; it's made from a piece of Homasote fiberboard stretched with a favorite fabric and fitted into a painted frame.

**Format memo tray**, \$20; **Format tank tray**, \$20; and **Format stacking boxes**, \$30 for 3; cb2.com.

## Corner office

With a desk, a bulletin board, and a coat of paint, you can turn a nook in the kitchen (or anywhere else) into a functional workspace; add a fabric shade for instant visual calm.

### GET THE LOOK



Deluxe acrylic plate stand, from \$13, [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com).



Stack and Fit drawer with inbox, by Office by Martha Stewart, \$20, [staples.com](http://staples.com).



Whitewashed wooden bins, from \$13, [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com).



1



2



3



4

### DESKTOP HELPERS

A pair of boxes and a pencil cup share space on a decorative tray; we covered the bulletin board in fabric to match the wall (1). A Lucite plate stand props up a tablet for easy reading and recipe-following (2). An erasable weekly calendar helps keep track of appointments or daily menus (3). Choose a stool and file cabinet that tuck beneath the desk (4), and when the shade is lowered, the work space will virtually disappear.

Craft Space table, in Picket Fence, by Martha Stewart Living, \$229, [homedecorators.com](http://homedecorators.com). Dry-erase weekly calendar (similar to shown), by Office by Martha Stewart, \$6, [staples.com](http://staples.com).







**A WELL-CRAFTED REFUGE**

*A whole room dedicated to a hobby, like Martha's attic crafts space, is a true luxury. To make it work for you, list all the necessary tools and supplies before you plan the layout, and remember to display things that spark your creativity.*



SIMON UPTON



# Creative spaces

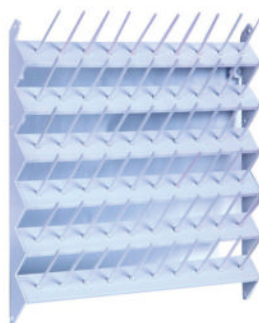
Martha's tricks for organizing crafts supplies can be applied to a work space of any size. Lacquered wooden cubbyholes store papers in various shapes and sizes (1); smaller items are kept in glass jars. A wooden spool rack keeps thread arranged by color and always at the ready (2). Flat-file drawers house fabrics sorted by color and type (3). Score-and-snap acrylic drawer dividers corral scissors and cutters; a graduated spice rack works well for jars of glitter (4)



## GET THE LOOK



Craft Space storage hutch, \$329, and Craft Space storage cabinet, \$449, in Rhododendron Leaf, by Martha Stewart Living, [homedecorators.com](http://homedecorators.com).



Arranger 60-plus thread rack, by Sew Tech Thread Stands, \$30, [allstitch.com](http://allstitch.com).

## Up against a wall

Arrange a pair of workstations along one wall, and two people can work at home as comfortably as one. Include a few functional elements in the symmetrical setup, like a long linen-covered bulletin board and a cart for shared supplies.



### ON A ROLL

Stow a rolling table between the desks for a portable workstation. Outfit the cart with the equipment and tools you use the most: This example, for wrapping gifts, has a cutting board with a grid on top and a magnetic towel rack to hold scissors. Wrapping-paper tubes are slid into wine racks; clear portfolios protect flat paper.

### GET THE LOOK



Go-Cart three-shelf table,  
in Carbon, \$149, [cb2.com](http://cb2.com).





## OFFICE MATES

This open-plan double office occupies part of a bigger room, so attractive storage solutions are a must. Sleek kitchen cabinets hung overhead eliminate the need for bulky file cabinets and provide easy access to documents. A backdrop crafted from alternating panels of pin-up and magnetic board is covered in unifying swaths of vivid aqua linen. Magnetic hooks, caddies, and bins provide hanging storage for small items. Spice jars and bowls stash pushpins, stamps, and other odds and ends, leaving the Parsons-style desks relatively clutter-free.

**Helmer drawer units on casters** (similar to shown), in white, \$40 each; and **Sektion horizontal wall cabinets with doors** (similar to shown), from \$110 each, [ikea.com](http://ikea.com).

## GET THE LOOK



Silver magnetic mesh bin, from \$5, [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com).



Magnetic spice tin, by Kamenstein, \$3, [bedbathandbeyond.com](http://bedbathandbeyond.com).



## It takes two

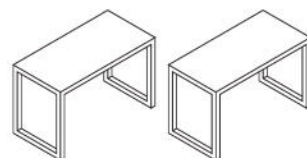
The old adage is true: There is strength in numbers. When one simple object is coupled with a matching mate (or grouped with a few siblings), its style and usefulness multiply exponentially.

Parsons desks (similar to shown), in White, \$400 each, [westelm.com](http://westelm.com). Plexiglas panel, in color #2085, \$205 per 4' by 8' sheet, [canalplastic.com](http://canalplastic.com).



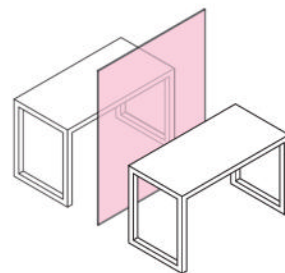
### DOUBLE DESK

You have space for a home office... but you have to share it. Popular opinion prescribes using the same desk or lining two against a wall, but face-to-face can be fun: This workstation, using two slender work tables, creates two zones without breaking up the room. Light (and enlightenment) flow freely; walls are left open for books.



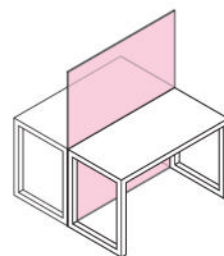
START WITH TWO SIMPLE DESKS

+



INSERT A PLEXIGLAS PANEL

=



PUSH THE DESKS TOGETHER,  
BACK TO BACK

### HOW-TO

To determine the dimension of the **Plexiglas** divider, measure the width and height of one desk, then add 28 inches to the height. Our fluorescent-pink acrylic sheet is a quarter-inch thick with polished edges (ask for them when you order it from the plastics supplier). Position the sheet between the **desks**, push them together, and voilà—the weight of the tables will secure the center panel. With **binder clips** or **artist's tape**, the divider doubles as a chic bulletin board.



# Good Things for home offices



## home-office inspiration board

The so-called blog room at Martha's is a cross between a home office and fan-mail headquarters (and the perfect hideout for Vivaldi, left, and Paw Paw.) To that end, the space needed an oversize bulletin board to display photos, slide-show ideas, and artwork sent in by Martha's readers and blog followers. This one is fabricated from gray Forbo, an eco-friendly material made from linseed oil, cork, pine rosin, and jute. Forbo is sold by the square foot. We mounted a large piece to plywood and then hung it on the wall and framed it with molding.



### DREAM DRAWERS

Say so long to the black hole where paper clips, breath mints, and old pay stubs accumulate with abandon. Arrange tiny items in a variety of small boxes, and tuck them inside desk drawers.

You'll be delighted to look inside and more likely to find exactly what you're looking for.





## Good Things for home offices

### cut-to-fit magnetic wallpaper

Kids need a good spot to get work done, too. A narrow nook over a built-in desk is just the spot for a bold graphic like this rabbit wallpaper: It serves as a magnet board and decoration. An older child could use it to hold favorite doodles, notes, and mementos. Pick your favorite animal—the rabbit, or an owl, a giraffe, a zebra, a fox, or others—and then apply it following the manufacturer's instructions.

**Printed magnetic wallpaper**, 104" by 25", in Rabbit, \$83, [groovymagnets.com](http://groovymagnets.com).  
**Type 75 mini LED table light**, in Powder Blue, \$175, [shophorne.com](http://shophorne.com). **Basel chair**, in Cream, \$550, [vitra.com](http://vitra.com).



### order up!

An aluminum ticket holder, which helps short-order cooks keep checks straight, also can prove invaluable keeping short-order moms' desktops in check. Marbles inside the wall-mounted track grab onto notes, lists, and ephemera, and all are held securely—no pinholes required. The groove along the top proves handy for displaying photos and postcards and corralling wayward miscellany.

**Checkminder**, 24", \$11, [restaurantequipsolutions.com](http://restaurantequipsolutions.com).

### go full circle

These weekly calendar circles feature dry-erase surfaces where you can write—and then rewrite—appointments, messages, and notes.

**Weekly dry-erase calendar circles**, in Coral, by Martha Stewart Wall Art Decals, \$30, [fathead.com](http://fathead.com).



### flip your lid

A wooden pot-lid rack is ideal for holding mail. For easier viewing, place smaller items, such as letters and postcards, at the front and larger catalogs and magazines at the back.



# Ask Martha

Bringing order to a magazine collection, staying on top of credit-card receipts, and properly disposing of an old computer

## SAVING MAGAZINES

**Q:** *My husband keeps a lot of magazines in his home office. Do you have any suggestions for organizing them?*

**A:** With the help of some basic tools, you can turn your husband's collection into a working reference library. For starters, you'll want to invest in some magazine files and three-ring binders. Files are great for storing magazines encyclopedia-style so that they can be referenced easily. He can group the issues by date, topic, or season, or however else he wishes to categorize them. Many files have a label holder, so they can be marked easily. You can also place them on shelves or desktops so that the label side is forward, or turned around so the spines of the magazines are showing.

If he's holding on to a magazine for only one article, it makes sense to remove it, store it in a binder, and recycle the rest of the

magazine. Linen-covered or patterned binders come in a variety of styles that will complement his office's color scheme and aesthetic. To cut an article out neatly, drag a craft knife along the page close to the spine. Then place the article in a sheet protector, so it can be filed later. Next, figure out an appropriate way to organize the binders; they can be grouped by subject, date, or however he'd like. Whatever way he chooses to display them, the magazine collection will be neat, contained, and easily accessible.



Keep clutter contained by investing in magazine holders for all your favorite publications.

## FILING AWAY CREDIT CARD RECEIPTS

**Q:** *What is a good system for holding on to credit-card receipts?*

**A:** It's important to keep track of credit-card receipts so you can make sure your statements are correct, return products, or use warranties when necessary. At tax time, you'll need the information to complete your return.

First, set aside a spot to collect receipts as soon as you get them, whether you're at the store or printing one out after an online order. You might tuck them immediately into a zippered plastic envelope that you keep in a purse or glove compartment.

If it's unrealistic to think you'll file all of your receipts regularly, place a decorative box or basket in an accessible spot where everyone can place receipts. When you receive a credit-card statement, go through the box and compare the statements with your receipts, after which many can be discarded. If you spot a discrepancy, keep the relevant receipts and contact the bank. Other receipts to hold on to include those for items that can be returned or that have warranties. Also retain all credit-card receipts that you will need for tax returns (usually for business expenses and charitable donations).

For filing, buy accordion folders or envelopes; label them by month, credit card, or categories, such as entertaining, transportation, and medical expenses (a good system for tax purposes). Always keep the newest receipts in front, so they remain in chronological order.

## OUT WITH THE OLD COMPUTER

**Q:** *How should I dispose of my old computer? Can I recycle it, or should I just throw it away?*

**A:** Almost any new computer will be outdone by the next generation of processors and hard drives in a matter of months. What is now a state-of-the-art machine might seem like a dinosaur in a few years. But just because your computer is slower or has less memory than you want does not mean it is worthless. Think about those who still might find it useful: Local schools, training institutions, or nonprofit organizations are a few places to start. Many are underfunded and usually will welcome the donation—which also can provide you with a tax write-off—so it is worth the effort of a few telephone calls. Even if the computer is completely obsolete, you still may find someone who wants it. For example, people have begun collecting “classic computers.” Doing a simple search online, particularly on sites such as eBay, can lead you in the right direction.

If your computer is too old to be of use but too new to rate as an antique, it may indeed be ready for the trash. But you should not simply throw it away: Computers contain poisonous materials such as lead; many states classify discarded computers as hazardous waste. As a rule, they should be disposed of just like a television set or other household appliances. Depending on where you live, that could mean leaving it on the curb for bulk-waste or electronics collection by the sanitation department or taking it to a recycling center; call your local environmental protection agency for details on the rules in your area.

Whatever you do, to protect your privacy before getting rid of the computer, be sure to remove any personal information from the hard drive. First transfer any files you do want to save to an external hard drive or to your new computer. Then run a utility program, available in stores and online, to wipe the hard drive clean and overwrite any old data; if you're just going to recycle the hardware, you can remove the hard drive entirely and physically destroy it.



**CLEAN MACHINES**

*To ensure that the computers and other electronics in your study stay in tip-top shape, you'll need to commit to some dedicated hardware maintenance. Paper towels are too abrasive to use on a monitor, so always clean it with a soft cloth, preferably microfiber. As for really tight spaces, like the holes in a telephone receiver? A toothpick does just the trick.*

# technology



With the push of a button, **ELECTRONICS HELP US GET THROUGH OUR DAYS A LITTLE MORE EASILY.** Yet somehow they rarely make it onto our homekeeping to-do list. Here, a guide to storing your technology, **MAINTAINING THE EQUIPMENT, AND UTILIZING IT EFFICIENTLY.**



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## Lighten the load<sup>3</sup>

The total weight of your handbag and its contents shouldn't exceed 10 percent of your body weight, according to recommendations from the American Chiropractic Association. If you want to solve the mystery of your aching back and sore shoulders, you might want to upend your bag and take inventory of all those small items, whose cumulative weight adds up. Here's how to shave pounds from your shoulder bag.

Dump everything out and ask yourself some hard questions: Why do you carry three lipsticks when you only wear one? When do you plan on sharpening that broken pencil? Create little kits—workday, weekend, makeup—that are easy to pack when you need them and easy to ditch when you don't.



If you tend to carry a book, try downloading an e-reader app so you can read on your phone. With the Key Ring app ([keyringapp.com](http://keyringapp.com)), you can store all your shopper-rewards numbers and gift cards. Your wallet can lose weight, too, with an app like Lemon Wallet, which lets you upload (and password-protect) your various IDs and membership cards. Granted, when you rely on your phone for so much, you don't want to be caught with no juice, so carry that back-up charger.

Thanks to mobile devices and Wi-Fi, it's easy to take your work wherever you wish to go. Just as with your desk, you want the contents of your shoulder bag to be user-friendly.



### BAG IT UP

Use clear-sided pouches for your kits. They let you quickly assess the contents, like on-the-go cosmetics or a workday kit, with building and office IDs and keys.

Clarity plastic zip pouches, in Small, \$36 each, [onetruffle.com](http://onetruffle.com).

### BACK UP

A phone and a tablet can serve most of the same purposes as a laptop without weighing you down. (Bonus: In airports, you don't need to remove a tablet from a bag for screening, according to current TSA guidelines.) A backup power supply extends your phone time.

IBoost mini power bank (similar to shown), \$30, by Triple C, [gotriplec.com](http://gotriplec.com).

### APP IT UP

Even your key-chain can benefit from an edit: Try a phone app (see left) in lieu of all those customer-loyalty tags.



#### INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY

The screen should be at eye level. Position it on the desk so that when you sit down and straighten your arm, your pointer finger is at the center of the screen. If you have a laptop, elevate it to the proper height—we used a clothbound box—and use an external keyboard and mouse to avoid hunching your back.



Hide chargers and extra cords inside!

## Computer refresh

Be sure to clean your computer and its components—particularly any internal parts—with a gentle, cautious touch, and read the manual first. Never use harsh cleaning sprays or abrasive cleansers, and remember to unplug before you start.



To remove stubborn stains between keys, use a cotton swab that's been dipped in alcohol and squeezed so it's just damp.

## 1

### Keyboard

Your keyboard is a receptacle for all kinds of dirt and grime—even crumbs, if you eat at your desk. Spray compressed air in short bursts between the keys to dislodge particles. Then turn the keyboard over and gently shake out any remaining dirt. Finish by wiping the keys with a cloth dampened with a solution of a drop of mild dishwashing liquid and 1 quart of water.

**DO** buy an extension tube for your can of compressed air to really get between the keys.

**DON'T** spray liquids—even water—directly onto the keyboard.

## 2

### Monitor

Turn off the monitor before you begin; you can see smudges better against a black screen. Use a soft microfiber cloth to wipe dust off the screen, then dampen the cloth with a spray specifically designed for LCD and plasma monitors and wipe again to erase smudges and grime. Use a mixture of equal parts vinegar and water to de-smudge if you don't have the cleaning spray.

**DO** clean the screen only when it's cool, and only with light pressure. Heat can cause permanent streaks on the monitor when it's wiped.

**DON'T** use alcohol- or ammonia-based products; they can damage monitors.

## 3

### Computer Tower

A computer runs most efficiently when heat is allowed to escape; trapped dust impedes this. If you have a desktop that comes with a stand-alone tower, unplug it and consult the owner's manual about how to open its case to dust the interior. (If you keep your tower on the ground and have a pet, it may be especially clogged with dust and fur.) Use a microfiber cloth to wipe nonelectrical parts, such as the fan, and a can of compressed air to blow dust out of electrical parts, like the motherboard.

**DO** ground yourself by touching the case or wearing a static wrist guard. You don't want to inadvertently discharge static electricity and damage the electrical parts.

**DON'T** use a vacuum cleaner to remove dust from electronics, as it can cause static electricity.

## 4

### Printer

Moisten a soft cloth with water, and wipe down the exterior of the machine, as well as the paper rollers. Use a moistened cotton swab for hard-to-reach areas. On laser printers, employ a dry swab to dust the corona wires, which are what make the paper attract toner. (Dirty wires can degrade the print quality.) Use compressed air to blow dust from the fan and vent. If the printer has a self-cleaning option, select it to clean the print head, which applies ink to the paper.

**DO** buy toner cleanup cloths (sold at office-supply stores) in case you get toner on your hands.

**DON'T** clean the interior, aside from the cartridge.

## 5

### Electric Fan

A fan is a veritable dust magnet. Unplug it, remove the screens, and wash them in a tub or bucket of soapy water. Then wipe each blade with a soft cloth dampened with the soapy water.

**DO** refer to the owner's manual for dismantling procedures (every fan is different).

**DON'T** reassemble until all the parts are completely dry.



## Hidden assets

Modern technology doesn't need to be incompatible with old-fashioned comfort. Even the latest high-end electronics can fit unobtrusively into any room.



### KITCHEN

Save precious counter space by suspending a screen that works as a television and a computer monitor, keeping it a safe distance from the sink and the stove.

#### Monitor

The flat panel (above) pulls down easily from its horizontal position under the cabinet. A fist-size swing-arm mount not only holds it in place but also hides cables and hardware and allows the screen to be rotated easily.

#### Keyboard

A wireless keyboard and mouse are housed in a drawer retrofitted with hinges and glides on both sides. When the drawer is closed and the screen is flipped out of sight, (left) there is no evidence of any electronics.

#### Computer

The monitor connects to a laptop and a cable box that are placed in the closed cabinet above the counter, permitting television and Internet access and the screening of DVDs.

ERIC PIASECKI





IN-WALL SPEAKER

## LIVING ROOM

*Consolidating all of your electronics in one custom cabinet keeps the room uncluttered. Linen panels conceal the flat-panel television when it's not in use.*

### Video/Sound System

Holes in the back panel of the lower cabinet prevent overheating, even when doors are closed.

### Universal Touch-Screen Remote

This device, which operates many electronics, eliminates the confusion of having several remotes. A receiver in the top of the cabinet picks up the device's infrared signal and passes it to the components below, even from a distance of 50 feet.

### Hidden Speakers

They need to be exposed, but in-wall versions can be painted to match a room's wall color (*left*) and some bookshelf speakers can be fitted with grates in coordinating colors (*right*).

### Power Strip

Accessibility is important, so the strip is turned so that the plugs are facing forward. Printed labels identify each plug, and a built-in line conditioner prevents power surges.



VIDEO/SOUND SYSTEM



REMOTE CONTROL



BOOKSHELF SPEAKER



POWER MANAGEMENT

## ULTIMATE ELECTRONICS

In the best of all possible high-tech worlds, you would have access to audio or video in any room in the house at the touch of a button. That's where whole-home systems come in.

### CUSTOM INSTALLER

Find an installer who has been certified by the Custom Electronic Design and Installation Association ([electroniclifestyle.com](http://electroniclifestyle.com)). Tour some of his installations before signing a contract.



### AUDIO-VIDEO EQUIPMENT RACK

Designate a closet to house all of your audio and video gear, including your cable box and stereo receiver. The space needs to be properly ventilated and should have broadband access.



### WIRING AND CONDUITS

Audio and video components need to be connected to the speakers and television in each room. It's best to use wires that travel through conduits to each room. If you are renovating or building a new home, have conduits put in, even if you don't plan on a whole-home system immediately.



## BEDROOM

*It is the room where serenity reigns supreme, so visible high-tech toys can be especially disconcerting.*

### Rising Television

A linen cupboard (above left) is fitted with a hydraulic lift that allows a flat panel to pop up from the back of it with the push of a button. The television is enclosed in a case, the top of which becomes part of the cupboard's surface when the television is lowered (above). Yet there is still room inside the cabinet to store sheets and towels.

### Alarm Clock and Speakers

The bedside cabinet (left) holds a DVD player, a cable box with a built-in DVR, and a wireless transmitter, which sends video to any television or computer in the home. Ventilation for items hidden behind closed doors is key; the solid wooden door on the bedside table was replaced with caning so that air can circulate inside the cabinet. An MP3 alarm clock lets you wake each morning to your favorite song.

## GET THE LOOK



Ingrid bookcase with doors, in Rubbed Grey, by Martha Stewart Living, \$699, [homedecorators.com](http://homedecorators.com).



A5+ 5" Active 2-Way Speakers, in Bamboo, by Audioengine, \$469 per pair, [bhphoto.com](http://bhphoto.com).



# Ask Martha<sup>3</sup>

Reining in cord chaos, tidying your digital desktop, getting your whole family's schedule on the same page, and more

## CORD CONTROL

**Q:** *My husband loves his technology but the back of our entertainment center is a jumble of cords. Is there a way to reorganize the cords and hide them from view?*

**A:** The first step to organizing your knot of wires is bundling them together with either Velcro strips or cable ties. Gather the cables starting at the electronics, and work your way toward the power source. Try to group them by their purpose—keep TV, cable, and DVD cords in one group, stereo and speaker cords in another, and so forth.

Once the cables are bundled, label each so you'll know which cord is which. Write the name of each device with a permanent

marker on plastic key tags (available at most office-supply stores), and attach the clips to the proper cords.

Even after you've untangled, arranged, and identified your cords, there may be surplus cable lengths peeking out from behind your media center. Belkin's power block with cord organizer ([belkin.com](http://belkin.com)) lets you plug in your devices and tuck cords into a separate compartment. Another option is a covered cable box, which camouflages a surge protector you already have. For instance, the Bluelounge cable box ([bluelounge.com](http://bluelounge.com)) has ample room to contain looped wires, hiding everything from view.

## DISINFECT THESE

**Q:** *How can I sterilize my mouse, keyboard, smartphone and remote controls without ruining them?*

**A:** Handheld gadgets and equipment get touched—a lot. So they may require a cleaning agent with a little more oomph than plain old water. To rid them of germs, simply dip a soft cloth into rubbing alcohol, squeeze the cloth so that it's damp but not dripping, and wipe down the gadget completely. Rubbing alcohol evaporates quickly, so you don't have to worry that the liquid will ruin the electrical parts. Or, even easier: Use a sanitizing wipe.

## CLEAN UP YOUR DESKTOP

**Q:** *My computer desktop is a mess. I have too many icons on the screen. How can I organize it?*

**A:** Confronting an unholy mess every time you turn on your computer negates the benefits of an organized work space.

Filing away documents on a computer—and subsequently retrieving them—is infinitely easier than filing away papers. So actually do it! Set up a system, such as filing by project or by month and year (or whatever works for your needs), then start putting things away.

Some services are indispensable for helping you manage information and files. These are some of our editors' favorites:

**MINT:** This website can help you keep track of your bills, payments, and personal finances.

**POPMONEY:** Short for "pay other people," this lets you pay babysitters, tradespeople, and friends in cash-free transactions.

**DROPBOX:** If you keep or share large digital files (such as photos, videos, or presentations), this service will store them easily and allow authorized users access.

## EMAIL OVERLOAD

**Q:** *What is the best way to organize my email messages?*

**A:** Lately, the "inbox zero" idea has been catching on; if that seems extreme, aim instead for 20 to 40 emails. As you winnow your inbox, choose among these actions: delete, reply, and archive/file (in a designated folder).

Tackle your email in 20-minute time blocks. Taking short breaks to surf the Web tends to boost productivity, but dealing with email decreases productivity and makes people cranky, according to a 2008 study by the National University of Singapore. To that end, spend no more than 20 minutes at a time emailing.

Label or file emails to keep track of them: Even general groupings—photos, tax stuff, insurance—will help. If your email lists files alphabetically, insert "aa\_" in front of files you want at the top (*aa\_family&friends*) and "zz\_" at the bottom (*zz\_taxes*).

## SYSTEMIZE YOUR PASSWORDS

**Q:** *I often forget my passwords when shopping online. Do you have any suggestions on how I can manage them?*

**A:** Lots of people use slight variations of the same password for different sites—and then can't recall which variation was for which site. Institute a system in which you use the same base alphanumeric phrase, plus initials that pertain to the particular site ("AM" for Amazon, say).

If there are sites that you buy from all the time, give them dedicated email files. When you get order-, shipping-, and return-confirmation emails, file them away there, so they're easy to find if you need to track a purchase, package, or refund.

## A CALENDAR ON THE GO

**Q:** *Each member of my family has his or her own calendar of commitments. How can we sync them all?*

**A:** Paper calendars still have their place (likely on the refrigerator door), but they won't do your family much good away from home. Instead, create a digital calendar for the entire family, using Google Calendar, Outlook, or iCal. Make brief but detailed entries ("Dad's party, 7 p.m., 477 Elmwood Ave. at Hodge"), and add the whole family to the invite.

Set preferences for each family member's digital calendar so reminders are sent as emails, texts, or both. Choose the timing that works best for each person, like an email reminder four hours in advance of the event, as well as a text message 45 to 90 minutes before.



# utility rooms

## TIDY UP

*A row of Shaker-style pegs can store necessary tools like brushes and dustpans. Accessibility and visibility make sense when it comes to cleaning and washing.*



Utility rooms are the **WORKHORSES OF ANY HOME**. Unlike living and dining rooms, they are rarely seen by guests. Yet these spaces still need to be **THOUGHTFULLY ARRANGED**: Every paint can; every wrench and screwdriver; and every broom and scrub brush **SHOULD HAVE A FIXED SPOT**. Keep the right tools and supplies close at hand, and watch how quickly **YOU CAN ACCOMPLISH EVERY CHORE ON YOUR LIST**.

MATTHEW WILLIAMS



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Your rose will be shipped in a 2 quart pot in spring at the proper time for planting in your zone. Recommended for zones 5-9. **Item MM066871, This exclusive introduction is specially priced for our readers at \$19.95 each plus shipping.**

## **CLEMATIS STILL WATERS™**

Grace your garden with the shimmering beauty of this high-climbing Clematis. The vigorous vine blooms all season long, covering itself with silvery lavender-blue blossoms. A circle of dark red stamens at the center of each flower adds eye-catching counterpoint, and the dark green leaves make an ideal backdrop for these ethereal blooms. Planted in sun or partial shade, the vine will grow up to 7' tall.

Ships in a 1 quart pot in spring 2016 at the proper planting time for your hardiness zone. Recommended for zones 5-9. **Item MM026529, \$21.95 each plus shipping.**



## Set up stations

Small “I’ll get to it later” chores have a way of piling up into seemingly insurmountable mounds—for example, mountains of clothes to wash for an entire family or stacks of holiday presents to ship to far-flung family and friends. But with well-organized centers for laundry, household repairs, and mailing packages, those tasks become far less daunting.



Wide shelving units expand the storage space upward in this small room.

A small ironing board makes the most of limited counter space.

A storage cabinet provides an extra surface for sorting and folding garments.



## LAUNDRY STATION

Make your laundry room work harder. Versatile wall shelves, repurposed counter space, and assigned spots for frequently used tools enhance the usefulness of a small space.

*Opposite page: Laundry-storage two-door cabinet, in Picket Fence, \$329, and Solutions entryway shelf with hooks, in Picket Fence, \$69, by Martha Stewart Living, [homedecorators.com](http://homedecorators.com). Tabletop ironing board, in Natural, \$20, [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com).*



### 1 Decanted Detergent

Replace bulky boxes of laundry detergent and stain-treatment materials, such as baking soda and cotton balls, with refillable clear containers.

### 2 Mending Kit

Any tears should be repaired before washing a garment. Keep different thread colors and sewing needles on hand so you can tackle any job.

### 3 DIY Scent

Add organic essential oils to unscented dryer sheets as an alternative to buying pre-scented versions.

### 4 Stain-Removal Kit

Pour solvents and cleaners into clearly labeled bottles, and corral them with the necessary application tools in a tray near a stain guide. (Download and print ours at [marthastewart.com/stain-chart](http://marthastewart.com/stain-chart).)

## GET THE LOOK



Polypropylene Make box,  
\$6, [muji.com/us](http://muji.com/us).



Synthetic deck scrub brush, \$6,  
[homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com).



Use every bit of space by installing high shelves for extra supplies or things you don't use often.

If you have the room, add a worktable for projects. Adding casters makes it movable.

Use large bins for bulky supplies, such as drop cloths and extension cords.

## HARDWARE AND REPAIR STATIONS

When you need to rewire a lamp, change a lightbulb, or hang a picture, you want to do the job with a minimum of fuss. You'll be able to if you have all the tools set up in a station like this, at far right. To get organized, first take an inventory of what you already have, and plan how many bins you'll need. It's worth the investment to set up properly—do this once and enjoy the system for years.

**Latch box**, in 66 qt., by Sterilite, \$47 for 4, [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com). **Softech twin wheel casters**, by Shepherd Caster Corp., \$5 each, [outwater.com](http://outwater.com).



#### TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

*Handle tools in the store before making a purchase, and select those that are right for the job and for you. A powerful drill becomes dangerous if it's too heavy to hold steady, and a 10-ounce hammer might be more comfortable than a 16-ounce one, for example.*



### 1 Flexible Shelving

The slots on this shelf system are meant for papers, so of course they're ideal for sheets of sandpaper. Dividers can be removed to make more room for compartmentalized cases that hold nails, screws, and other small hardware.

### 2 Specialized Kits

Group similar items and the things you need for specific tasks in bins: batteries or electrical supplies, for example. Keep them in stacking bins in different sizes so you can grab one to take wherever you need it.

### 3 Magazine Holders

Use sturdy holders for magazines you want to keep as well as catalogs, instruction manuals for appliances, repair records and receipts, and other household documents. Add labels to keep track of them all.

**Craft Space magazine files, \$14 each,** by Martha Stewart Living, [homedecorators.com](http://homedecorators.com).

### 4 Magnetic Strip

Repurpose a magnetic knife strip meant for kitchen knives and use it to keep tools handy. This is also a great way to hang paintbrushes to dry.

#### GET THE LOOK



**Fintorp magnetic knife rack, \$13,** [ikea.com](http://ikea.com).

ORGANIZE SUPPLIES

*Group your supplies and products according to how you use them. Anything you regularly need should be within easy reach; extras and incidentals can go on a high shelf or another out-of-the-way spot.*

**1**  
**Open-Front Bins**

Plastic bins keep everything neat. Group similar items together, and add labels. Bins on the top shelf hold sponges and wipes, specialty cleaners are on the center shelf, and general household cleaners are on the bottom shelf.

**2**  
**Swing Hooks**

Maximize your space by hanging things up. On the side of the cleaning station, foldable stainless steel swinging hooks hold whisk brooms, a dustpan, and a cleaning brush. The hooks fold flat when not in use.

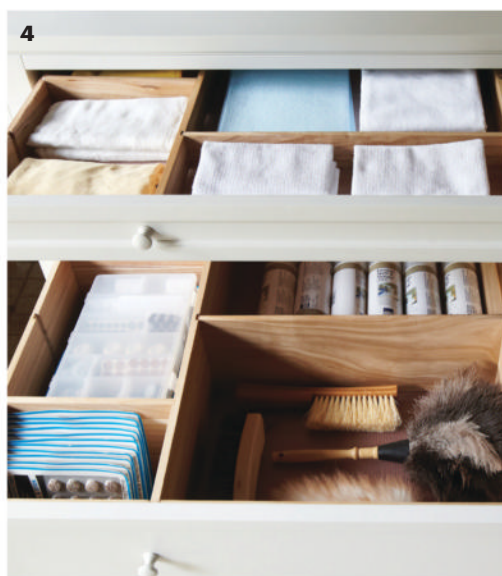
**Stainless-steel swing hooks (TK-45F)**, by Sugatsune, \$3 each, [simonsny.com](http://simonsny.com).

**3**  
**Shallow Drawer**

Many items are best stored lying flat, such as these window-washing squeegees and sleeves and bottle- and scrub brushes.

**4**  
**Divided Drawers**

Cleaning cloths (flannel, chamois, microfiber, and cotton) are folded and placed in short stacks—more manageable than an easy-to-topple tower. Group other items, such as surface protectors, non-skid shelf liner, and dusters, in divided drawers (plastic bins could do the job instead).







Use chalkboard paint to create a place to make notes and lists.

Group the equipment needed for specific cleaning tasks.

## CLEANING STATION

Cleaning becomes more pleasant when you have supplies at the ready. Keep everything in a central location, and then take what you need from room to room as you clean. Adding labels helps keep it all organized. This station gives you a place to post a schedule with tasks to be done weekly, monthly, and seasonally, as well as list products that need replacing.

**Stacking bins**, in Medium, in White, \$4 each, from [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com). **Craft Space Collection furniture**, by Martha Stewart Living, [homedecorators.com](http://homedecorators.com).



**Butterfly hook**, by Sugatsune, \$6, [zaplighting.com](http://zaplighting.com).



This metal cart on wheels provides another surface and additional storage.

A cutting mat protects a work surface and makes it more versatile.

For packing blankets and rolls of cushioned packaging material, roomy open shelving is ideal.



## PACKING STATION

Whether you're packing a gift to mail or a box to store away, you'll be glad to have the materials in one spot. A setup like this saves time on trips to the office-supply store and post office. (Did you know you can purchase and print postage at [usps.com](https://usps.com)—and have your packages picked up at home free of charge?) Open parcels here to contain any mess. Then flatten the boxes and gather the packing material to use again.

*Opposite page: Cutting mat, 24" by 36", by Martha Stewart Crafts, \$50, [michaels.com](https://michaels.com). Single-level carton stand with three dividers, \$74; rubber swivel casters, 4", \$27 for 4; chrome wire shelf with clips, 48" by 18", \$31; and shelf liner, 48" by 18", \$7; [globalindustrial.com](https://globalindustrial.com).*



### 1 Dowels

Unwieldy, heavy rolls of butcher and kraft paper are easy to handle on dowels, which also keep spools of string and twine from tangling. Pull off only what's necessary for a job and everything stays neat.

### 2 Small-Supply Drawer

Stock padded envelopes in the sizes you use the most. Keep office-supply basics—pens, glue sticks, rubber bands—tidy by separating them in small acrylic containers.

Acrylic stacking drawer organizers, from \$3 each, [containerstore.com](https://containerstore.com).

### 3 Hooks

Adding a double-pronged hook on the side of the hutch provides a sturdy spot for shopping bags. A magnetic strip on the other side holds scissors and a tape gun, top.

Stainless-steel double hook (EW-65E), by Sugatsune, \$32, [simonsny.com](https://simonsny.com).

### 4 Paper and Large-Supply Drawer

Sheets of newsprint for packing and acid-free tissue for storing items fit perfectly in a shallow drawer. Below it, a scale for weighing packages, stretch wrap, mailing tubes, and extra tape guns share space.

#### FIRE PREVENTION

*Never store highly combustible items in your basement unless they are in a closed cabinet. Keep a clutter-free zone at least 18 inches deep around your furnace. Have a fire extinguisher handy; carbon dioxide extinguishers are best since they don't harm electrical systems. Install a smoke detector.*





## The ultimate parking space

Garages were created for cars, but people park a lot of other stuff there as well. Garden shovels, sports gear, pet supplies—you name it. The catchall can quickly turn into a dumping ground, which is why organization is essential. Fortunately, with their high ceilings and open-frame walls, these utilitarian spaces can take on many storage solutions.



# **1 Bike Storage**

Hooks secured to a central post hang bikes up and out of the way.

# **2 Recycling Bins**

Plastic recycling bins are stacked on a mobile pallet next to a cabinet containing extra pantry supplies.

# **3 Drop-down Table**

A drop-down table on a hinged bracket turns a sunny window into a compact potting station.

# **4 Bins**

Baskets of auto-care essentials, such as engine fluids and washing tools, are mounted in the narrow space between the garage doors; the metal bin beneath is for rock salt.



## **GET THE LOOK**



Recycle bins, in white, from \$15 each, [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com).



FastTrack garage 1-bike vertical bike hook, \$10, by Rubbermaid, [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com).



Norberg wall-mounted, drop-leaf table, \$39, [ikea.com](http://ikea.com).



## Hardworking workshop

Think about the essentials of a workshop. First and foremost, the space has to be large enough to allow you to move around freely. Second, it should be equipped with sufficient electrical outlets for power tools and have adequate lighting; an overhead cage fixture illuminates the entire space in this garage workshop, and an industrial lamp with an adjustable arm delivers task lighting. Add the appropriate storage and work surfaces for your particular needs, and get to work.



A wall-mounted track system adds three tiers of shelving for paint supplies.

A framed piece of pegboard on the wall above the bench holds often-used tools.

Folding sawhorses on the two bottom hooks open easily when duty calls.

A portable metal toolbox can be used at the workbench wherever needed.





## Protect and preserve

Storing valuable items in an attic, where temperature extremes can wreak havoc, calls for archival-quality supplies. Here, industrial shelves are arranged to accommodate varying shapes and sizes, like the long cylinders of wrapped carpets and the taller bins below. The contents of each box and bag are identified with a label or photograph, which is then taped to the front. A moveable rack is handy for hanging clothes, curtains, and other fabric items (be sure to use breathable garment bags, as plastic dry-cleaning bags can trap moisture).

## Good Things for utility rooms



### plentiful pegs

Put the walls of a garden shed or mudroom to work: Install Shaker-style peg racks to stow essentials. Start with strips of wood the length of your wall (we used 3½-inch-wide poplar) and 3½-inch-long by ½-inch-diameter pegs. Paint both to match your trim. Let dry. Drill a hole in the rails for each peg, and then glue the pegs in. Attach the rails to the wall with screws (we hid ours under a few of the pegs).

### screen smarts

Prevent confusion the next time you make the seasonal switch from storm windows to screens. Use a label maker to identify which room and specific frame a screen or storm window fits, or write the information on a strip of painters' tape with a permanent marker. Stick the label to a top corner of each screen or window.



### put a ring on it

It's hard to keep track of small hardware such as washers, grommets, and nuts. Here's a handy way to organize them by size and type: String them on shower curtain rings. Hang the metal rings above your workbench so the loose hardware will be even easier to spot.



### stain aid

The first step to tackling a spot or spill is determining exactly how to get it out. This stain-removal chart helps you handle any mishap right away. For a durable, at-a-glance reference, download the chart from [marthastewart.com/stain-chart](http://marthastewart.com/stain-chart), print it out on letter-size paper, and slide it into a clear plastic sleeve. Secure one edge of the sheet in a skirt hanger, and hang it from a laundry-room shelf or some other central spot where all the launderers in the family can see it.





## tool wall

A hammer and nails are easy to find if everything is kept in its place. Create that place by marking the outlines of tools on a garage wall or above your workbench. We used black marker, but paint pens also work. The nuts and bolts can be organized in small clear-glass jars whose lids have been screwed to the underside of a shelf; use a hammer and nail to make holes in the lids before screwing them to the shelf.



## water down

Paying attention to the little things in your basement can save you a big mess—and headache—later. Label every valve so it's a cinch to shut off water at the source if necessary.

## ladder company

Take steps to create an original shelving system by retrofitting a wooden ladder. Use an old ladder of your own, or hunt for vintage or new models at flea markets, home-supply stores, or online. You'll need one with two sides of steps. For the shelves, 1-by-12 boards will work on most ladders (use two side by side, if necessary). Have them cut 16 inches longer than the space between each pair of rungs; you'll have an 8-inch overhang on each side. If desired, prime and paint planks and ladder (we left our planks bare). Secure planks to steps with 1½-inch screws: Predrill holes, and then drill in screws.



# Good Things for utility rooms

## kit out your supplies

Filling bins with the tools needed for specific cleaning, maintenance, and repair jobs streamlines your work around the house. Just pull out the kit you need and take it to the room where you need it. Here are four basics good for every home.



### DRYWALL REPAIR

*If you get a hole in your drywall or need to cover seams, grab this kit.*

- Taping knife
- Joint compound
- Wood putty
- Lightweight spackling compound
- Putty knife
- Fiber-mesh tape
- Sponge
- 5-in-1 tool
- Sanding block
- Medium and coarse sandpaper



### FURNITURE REPAIR

*Get a nick or drip candle wax on your wooden furniture? Use these for quick fixes.*

- Plastic scrapers, for removing hardened wax
- Wax sticks in assorted wood tones
- Paste shoe polish
- Fine sandpaper
- Extra-fine steel wool
- Wood-stain markers in different finishes



### PICTURE HANGING

*Keep hardware for different weights and frame styles so you're always ready to hang a new find or redecorate.*

- Painters' tape
- Measuring tape
- Level
- Divided boxes with picture wire, assorted hangers and D rings
- Nonskid plastic bumpers and Velcro dots for backs of frames
- Wire cutters
- Awl
- Pencil



### SMALL HARDWARE

*Use compartmentalized cases for nails, screws, and other hardware in a variety of sizes.*

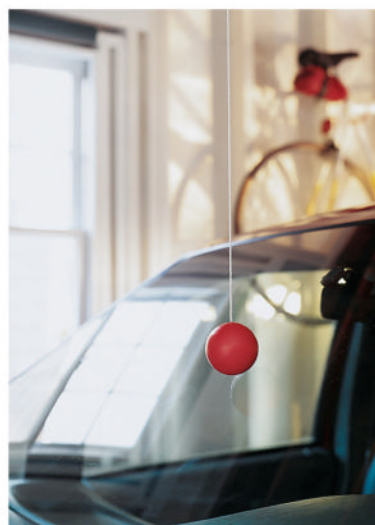
- Nails: brads, common nails, annular ring nails, cut brads, cut nails, finishing nails
- Screws: brass, stainless steel, wood; self-tapping #6s and #8s in 1-inch, 1½-inch, 1¾-inch, 2-inch, and 2½-inch sizes
- Wall anchors for hollow and solid surfaces
- Hooks and eyes: screw hooks, screw eyes, cup hooks, L-shaped



### METAL ATTRACTION

Adhere a strip of magnetic tape sold at hardware stores, toward the rear of the pan.

The tape will attract any small metal objects—such as nails, brads, or screws that find their way onto the floor—holding them fast as you tilt the pan to sweep up debris.



## ball park

Take the guesswork out of parking in the garage. Park the car, leaving ample space on all sides, then hang a ball on a string from the ceiling so it touches the windshield. When you park, drive in slowly until the ball taps your windshield.



# Ask Martha<sup>3</sup>

Keeping a basement dry, stocking up in bulk, taking care of broom bristles, and more

## STORING BULK ITEMS

**Q:** *What's the best way to store bulk items in the basement?*

**A:** Set up shelving for bulk items—food and household products—near the door to the space or the foot of the stairs where the items will be the most accessible. Stack heavier items on the bottom shelves for stability. Stretch bungee cords across the front and sides of open shelves to secure items that might slide or tip over. Tuck a step stool underneath so you can reach items at the top. Use S-hooks to hold an inventory list and keep necessities handy: scissors, or a box cutter for packages, a funnel for decanting liquids, and a scoop for dry goods.

## ABOUT BASEMENT WINDOWS

**Q:** *What is a window well?*

**A:** A window well is a cutaway in the soil around a basement window that lets light in and serves as an emergency exit. Building codes demand “egress” or a safe exit when a bedroom is located below ground. A window well or bulkhead (a sloping exterior door) satisfies the requirement. In the former case, most codes call for one window that is 5.7 square feet or larger and no more than 44 inches off the floor, so a person could boost himself up and out. Unless the lot slants, there often isn’t room between the ground and the top of a foundation for a window that complies with these regulations. That’s where window wells come in. To make one, the soil outside must be cut back around the window, creating a landing that is at least three by three feet. There also needs to be a reinforcing system, such as a metal or wooden wall,

to hold the soil in place. And if the outside landing is more than 44 inches belowground, there must be a ladder or steps. Check your local building codes for additional requirements.

Some window wells have grates over the top to prevent people—especially kids—from tumbling in and to provide extra protection against intruders. You may also install bubblelike covers, which keep water from draining onto the landing and then seeping into the basement. Grates or covers must be designed to be opened easily from the inside.

## BROOM CARE

**Q:** *I've heard that brooms should be stored upside down. Is that the best way to protect the bristles?*

**A:** Standing a broom (or any kind of cleaning brush) on its bristles makes it bend and break, and should always be avoided. Storing a broom upside down is one solution; special clips that allow you to do so can be found in hardware stores. But many brooms have a loop at the end of the handle, and hanging them right-side up from a hook is just as effective. Either way, your cleaning-supplies closet will be much neater and easier to navigate if you keep long-handled brooms and mops off the floor.



## DEHUMIDIFYING THE BASEMENT

**Q:** *Is there a way to dehumidify the basement so that it can be used for clothing storage and I can increase my storage space?*

**A:** A damp basement is commonly caused by moisture migrating through a concrete foundation, so even a finished basement can be one of the most humid spaces in a house. A moist environment is bad news for clothing since it promotes mold and mildew growth. One simple way to de-

crease humidity is to get rid of any excess cellulose materials such as paper or cardboard boxes, which attract moisture. If your heating system has a duct into the basement, running the heat during the winter should help dry out the space. During the summer months, when humidity is at its peak, you’ll want to use a dehumidifier. Keep in mind that fabric absorbs moisture if left in the open air, so to protect the clothing itself, use airtight plastic

containers to store dry items, and include some desiccant packets in each. And it’s a good idea to raise items in the basement, in case of flooding—concrete blocks or wooden or plastic pallets will work to keep your things dry.



No number of **BOXES, BINS, BASKETS**, or best intentions will ensure that you stay organized. **SCHEDULE REGULAR MAINTENANCE**—the following suggestions will help—and you'll keep on top of everything.

## Clutter-busting schedule

### DAILY

- Sort incoming mail; recycle junk mail and newspapers.
- Clear your desk or other work spaces.
- Hang up and put away clothing, shoes, handbags, and backpacks.
- Put away toys.
- Leave the kitchen in order before going to bed; clear dirty dishes from the sink and empty the dishwasher, if possible.

### WEEKLY

- Discard food that's past its prime.
- Empty your wallet of receipts and file them.
- Sort through invitations and other notices, jotting down important dates in your calendar and tossing outdated items.
- File away schoolwork, such as art projects and returned homework.

### MONTHLY

- Recycle magazines and catalogs you no longer want; store others.
- File paid bills.
- Put away important documents for long-term storage.
- Delete unnecessary digital files and back up the rest.

### TWICE ANNUALLY

- Toss out old cosmetics and grooming products.
- Dispose of expired medications.
- Discard pantry items that are no longer of use.
- Replenish first-aid kit.

### ANNUALLY

- Sort through clothing and toys; give unwanted items to charity.
- After paying taxes, do a thorough inventory of filed financial documents; shred what you don't need.
- Look through spices, and replenish as needed.
- Go through utility spaces; restock equipment, tools, batteries, and such, as needed.

### TACKLING TIME MANAGEMENT

Most of us want to get organized but feel we don't have enough time. It's just a matter of recognizing the occasional spare moments. Follow the guidelines below to take advantage of those opportunities.

#### IF YOU HAVE 10 MINUTES

- Clean out your handbag.
- Organize credit-card receipts.
- Sort through catalogs and magazines.
- Clear your e-mail inbox.
- Bag up recyclables.
- Take an inventory of cleaning supplies.

#### IF YOU HAVE 30 MINUTES

- Refold sweaters.
- Straighten a linen-closet shelf.
- Organize one drawer.
- Update a bulletin board.
- Sort through toys, and redistribute them.
- Update labels for containers.
- Clean out the refrigerator and/or freezer.

#### IF YOU HAVE 60 MINUTES

- Take an inventory of your pantry.
- Sift through clothes closets, looking for items to repair, clean, or donate.
- Rearrange books.
- Sort through financial records.
- Back up computer files.
- Straighten out boxes or bins in the garage, attic, or basement.



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