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Your Biggest Closet Problems *Solved*

We help you make the most out of your space with expert advice on stashing your stuff



Use spray paint to disguise knobs

Multi-pocket notepad hangs, \$24.95, at Walmart, www.walmart.com

Q I never know where to keep my purses. What are my best storage options?

A Divide your bags into three categories: current rotation, special occasions or end-of-season. If there's room, snagger pretty knobs or hooks on the back of your closet door for go-to handbags, says storage expert Sara Greenberg. "Approach it the same way you would if you were hanging multiple pieces of art. Start with the largest handbag and put it around it," she says. Put special-occasion clutches in a transparent container or an accessible closet shelf. Move out-of-season handbags to a high shelf, or relocate them to the hall closet. When not in rotation, purses should be stuffed with acid-free tissue paper (8 1/2 sheets, at the Container Store) to maintain their shape and kept in a felt bag.



The Container Store 14" x 8" plastic sweater drawer, \$22; containerstore.com

Q I have a hard time finding things in my closet. Help!

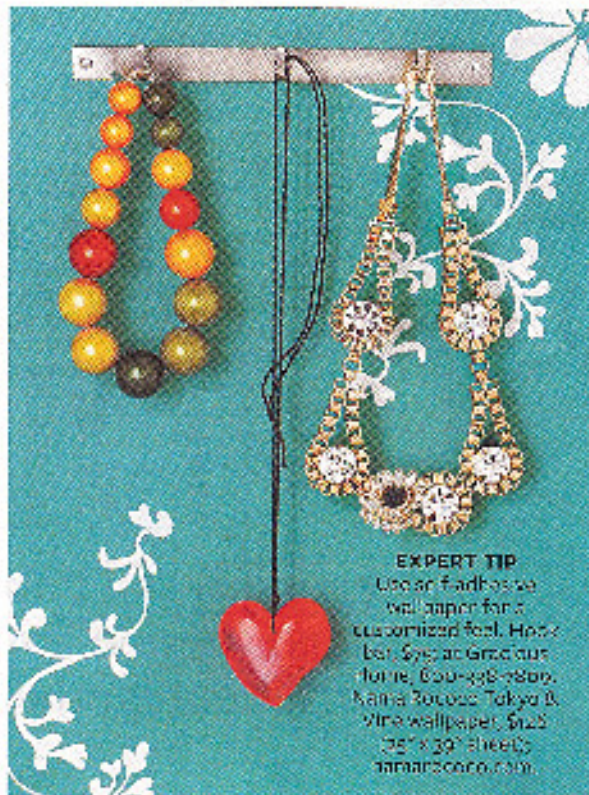
A Group garments by function (work, social, casual), then by type (skirts with skirts), and then color. "The goal is to arrange it the way you actually wear them. If you dress in the same three dozen items for work, categorize them together," says closet specialist Linda Becker. For sweaters and stack by color on a shelf in piles no more than 12 inches high. "You want to be able to pull them down without an avalanche," she says. Another solution: Color categorize hangers by function (work, social, casual) so you can quickly swap them out when the time comes.

Breathing Room

Remove all dry-cleaning bags from your closet to air out fumes and prevent fabrics from becoming discolored

Q My necklaces always get tangled. What's the easiest way to manage them?

A "Storing necklaces in a jewelry box can get messy," says Ecker. Instead, keep them separated by hanging on decorative hooks or knobs. Mount the pretty hardware on a shallow wall in your closet or near the mirror that you use to get ready each morning. Don't have a free area in your closet? Attach knobs to a bulletin board or create an accessories wall in your bedroom.



EXPERT TIP

Use an adhesive wall paper for a customized feel. Home Depot, \$15 an 8 1/2-foot roll; or, for a Great Outdoors theme, 600-498-7800. Kana Rococo Tokyo & Vine wallpaper, \$125 (25 1/2 x 30 sheets), kamanarococo.com.

Q I don't have enough room for all of my shoes and boots. Any suggestions?

A Think outside of the shoe box. Ecker recommends sorting by style or purpose and then reorganizing shoes to different areas of the house based on use. Shoes worn for errands can be stored by the front door in cubbies, shelves, or a plastic tray for winter boots. Reserve the bedroom closet for special pairs that need more care—place them in hanging shelves or on racks along the floor. Out-of-season shoes can be tucked away on a high shelf, under your bed, or in another storage area. As for the most challenging footwear—the ever-floppy, floor-cluttering tall boots? Line them up and fill with rolled magazines. This will help keep them neat and upright, while preserving their structure.

Q How can I create more capacity in my closet?

A "Approach your closet as if packing a suitcase for a long trip. If you throw things in, you will run out of room," says Greenberg. "When you take the time to fold and place objects with care, the suitcase often has room to spare." Start by evaluating your closet row by row. Donate what you don't use, then look for underused areas, such as a high shelf or the closet floor, she says. One space-saver: slim hangers (Joy Mangano Huggable Hangers, \$14), home-solutions.net.com), which give you more mileage out of your closet bar. —STEPHANIE DEVILO

OUR EXPERTS Lara Greenberg, author of *Screamline* Inc. (screamlineinc.com); Erica Ecker, owner of the Specialist (thespecialist.com); Michele Charlton Roschell, author of *Shop Your Closet*.

Keeping Up Appearances

You have your closet all mixed and matched. Now what?

GOT 5 MINUTES?

Vacuum or sweep your closet floor and refold messy piles of clothes.

GOT 15 MINUTES?

Put a pop-up mesh hamper or large shopping bag in the back of your closet for clothes that no longer fit or that you don't wear. Once it is full, give the items to charity.

GOT 1 HOUR?

Make a "look book" by taking photos of favorite outfits and gathering them in a three-ring binder. Catalogue by occasion—travel, dressy work, casual Friday—so you can get dressed quickly. Include runway images or magazine tears for inspiration. An even easier idea: Punch a hole in each photo and place on a key ring, then hang it to the knob on your closet door.

Linen-wrapped binder (\$24) and clear sheet protectors (\$15/10), Russell+Hazel; samflax.com.

