

Getting Organized

BY HANK MATHENY, ASID, IIDA



Today's closets can be stylish as well as highly organized and functional.

Inset top: A pivoting clothes bar brings clothing out and down for easy reach.

Inset bottom: Specialty items such as built-in safes, jewelry drawers and clothes hampers can make even a small closet highly functional and practical.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HASKELL CUSTOM CABINETRY.

Organizing your home can be an overwhelming task, especially if you let your possessions get the upper hand. If your closet door is bursting with clothes, if you spend more time clearing your desk than working at it, and if you can't find the Christmas ornaments, you probably have an organizational and storage problem. Here is some practical advice to motivate you to get started to tackle this challenge.

The basics are simple. (1) Start small. Even a single drawer can get you on the track to an organized life. Set a timer for an hour and stick to it until the buzzer sounds, or until you finish, whichever comes first. (2) Stick to it — don't get sidetracked. If you find something that belongs somewhere else, toss it in a separate box, then return it and other wayward items after your hour is up. (3) Divide your items into 3 groups: (a) keep; (b) discard; or (c) donate. If the item hasn't been

used in a year, consider donating or discarding it. Only the items in the "keep" group go back into the space. (4) Allow enough time. Most rooms can take from 4 hours to one day to sort and reorganize.

As you are getting motivated to have a more organized life, here are some basic tips and hints to keep you on track. For a tidier clothes closet, first remove everything and give your closet a thorough cleaning. Go through the sorting process described above

and then consider your needs. Do you need additional rods or more drawers to accommodate what's left? There are many available storage solutions to fit your needs. Buy uniform hangers to give your newly renovated closet a tidier, cleaner appearance. Take out-of-season items out and store them elsewhere, such as under the bed or in a basement or attic. Finally, organize what is left by season, color, length, or purpose.

When redesigning a closet, working with a professional is always a viable option to help you maximize your space and your budget. But there are some basic principles to organizing any storage space to keep in mind: never put anything on the floor; hang garments as close to the floor as possible: always double-hang short items: always place single hanging items at eye-level with more shelving above; and make all poles and shelves adjustable. It is always good to put in pull-outs and to maintain a separate area of shelving. Don't ignore the back of the door for ties, belts, shoes, or even bulletin and cork boards, as well as keys, brooms, and bags.

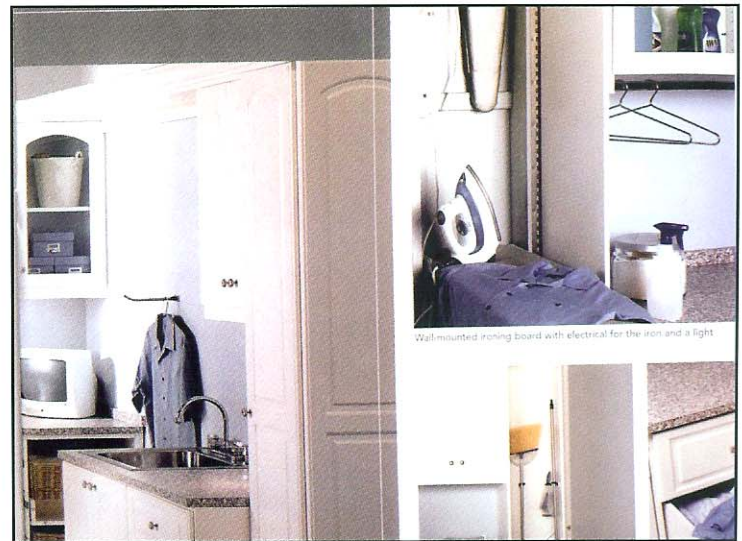
Laundry rooms rarely receive the attention they deserve, yet they are the work horse area in most homes. Still, laundry rooms deserve space planning and thoughtful organization just as much as any other room in the house, if for no other reason than to lighten the load. But there are some other reasons to get your laundry areas organized: harmful chemicals are often stored there; appliances may need removal and repair; and laundry rooms are susceptible to ventilation and plumbing problems. Finally, if you get your laundry room organized, it'll be easier to teach other family members to do their own wash (well, maybe that is wishful thinking!) Whether your laundry room is a dedicated space or in a closet, some small and simple storage solutions can make a big difference. Here are a few suggestions: (1) Install a flat counter height surface for sorting and folding; (2) Add shelves for supplies or a rolling caddy or wire shelving unit; (3) Install a rod between two cabinets or install a swinging rod so that you can store extra hangers and hang clean clothes on it directly from the dryer (you'll cut down on ironing time); (4) Keep three separate baskets for sorting dirty laundry: whites, darks, and lights; (5) Give each family member a colored basket for dirty laundry and on laundry day, when clothes are clean, simply sort and fold and put back into each person's basket.

Finally, in getting your life organized, don't forget the garage. Think of it as the world's biggest closet, and begin to sort and reorganize it just as you would any closet inside your home. First, pick a sunny day to pull everything out of your garage and clean the space. Group things into zones such as sports, lawn, auto, home maintenance, gardening and seasonal storage and group loose similar items into clear containers or wire baskets. Get things off the floor — bikes, garden tools, and hoses can be mounted on walls with specialty brackets. Be sure to lock any dangerous chemicals, such as pesticides, paints, gasoline and cleaners into a lockable heavy duty cabinet. Many unused areas can be fitted for storage: Overhead adjustable ceiling mounted wire shelves are great solutions for seasonal and holiday storage; if the walls are unfinished, shelves can be built between the studs for storage; a hammock can be strung across a corner to make storage space for lightweight sport balls and equipment; and peg board on a wall can be used to store tools, rakes, brooms, extension cords and Christmas lights.

Remember the basics — take on manageable projects, time yourself so that you don't get tired and frustrated, sort and discard items, and give yourself enough time to do the job — and eventually you will be rewarded with an organized, uncluttered life!

Would you like to have your design dilemma considered for an upcoming issue? Just send an e-mail to: designerguy@haskellinteriors.com.

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Top: Organize your laundry room with built-ins such as broom and pantry storage, hanging clothes rods and built-in ironing boards.

Center: Today's laundry room can be stylish and well-organized to reflect your personality.

Bottom: The garage is a great space to get highly organized ... think vertically to make the most of your space.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE CLOSET FACTORY