

## **MAXIMIZE YOUR STORAGE SPACE**

A lack of storage space is a common concern for many homeowners. Although a bigger problem for older homes, even new homes with all their closets and cupboards can seem cramped and cluttered.

There is a difference between not enough space and an ineffective use of space. The solution is to maximize all the space you have available. Most closets can hold much more than they do if they are properly organized. Not to mention all the valuable storage space lurking in nooks and crannies throughout your home.

Getting organized has become big business these days as busy people try to cram as much as possible into their lives - and their closets. A number of "organizer" stores have opened up dedicated entirely to storage solutions. The Ontario Real Estate Association and your local REALTOR® offer the following tips and suggestions to help you make the most efficient use of your "space."

### **Closets**

Professional organizers suggest emptying your closets completely before attempting to organize them. If you're like most people, you'll probably find some "hidden" treasures in your closets - things you either forgot you had or thought you had lost long ago. The trick of course is to purge as much as possible before trying to restore anything.

A variety of closet organizing units are available and you will definitely need to assess your storage needs before purchasing one. Also be sure to measure your closets carefully to ensure a proper fitting organizer.

You can also choose to create your own organizing "system" in your closets. For example, if you have two walls in your closet, you can add two rods, one above the other to hang shorter clothing such as pants, shirts and skirts. Install a shelf (or two) above your clothing rods and you have storage for boxes and items that don't get used frequently. The floor space of your closet is a good place for shoe organizers, luggage or storage boxes.

### **Storage boxes**

Everywhere you go it seems, you'll find an array of plastic storage units. These are ideal for everything from sweaters or summer gear to holiday decorations, toys, winter wear and so on. More economical choices are "bankers boxes" or file storage boxes. Just be sure to clearly mark each box before you stack them on a shelf.

### **Drawer organizers**

Any drawer will become cluttered without some form of space organization. A variety of expandable drawer organizers are available to tidy up everything from cluttered desk drawers to kitchen cutlery drawers or even "junk" drawers. A hanging jewelry organizer can handle all those tiny accessories you just don't know what to do with, but will use "someday."

### **Look for unused space everywhere**

Is there space on your kitchen walls for those big serving platters you don't know where to store? Many home décor stores offer wall racks or ceiling racks to hang your pots and pans. These not only provide extra storage, but can be decorative as well. Look for under table storage space - a great area for stackable baskets or vegetable bins, racks for canned goods. Under your bed is another untapped storage mine! Under bed containers are a perfect place to store linens or blankets.

**Creative shelving**

The configurations of most standard closets or cupboards are not space efficient. Take a close look at yours to see if you can add a shelf or two or change the height to match your needs. Plastic, multi-level shelving is perfect for kitchen cupboards.

A wide variety of kitchen cupboard organizers is also available. Everything from lazy susans to swing out recycling bins can help you put every inch of space in your kitchen to work for you.

**Where to begin**

Take a tour of your home and write down every possible storage area available - even if it's currently stuffed full. Next brainstorm all your necessary storage needs - the absolute essentials. Weeding out what's essential and what's clutter is a whole other topic. Finally, begin matching necessary items with available storage space. Be logical about this part. For example, store items within reach - tools and hardware in the garage, toilet paper in or near the bathroom, hats, mitts and scarves in a hall closet etc. If you really want to be organized you can create an inventory that details where you stored everything. Then, come the May long-weekend, you'll know exactly where the barbecue tools and the camping equipment are hiding.

A careful assessment, logical planning and a little creativity is all it takes to maximize your storage space.

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