

What's in Your Closet?

By Amy Simone

A Space in Time

Clothes closets are an integral part of our daily routine. Whether a reach-in or a walk-in, closets are an accessible source of valuable storage real estate and thankfully, rather inconspicuous once you close the door. But if you dread opening your closet door due to the space being overstuffed and/or poorly designed, let me help you get a handle on that.

Do you have trouble finding what you want to wear each day? When you pull one item out of the closet do other articles topple over? Capitalize on laundry day to see the contents of your closet in an honest light. Your favorite clothes are in the process of being washed and/or dried. The remaining garments in your closet are those pieces that you likely don't care for as much. Pull everything out of your closet and make a pile on the floor or on a bed. Try on every article of clothing with a mirror close by and assess if it fits and flatters you. Have a friend join you to provide extra encouragement during the clean-out step. If you simply don't like the garment or can't remember the last time you wore it, add it to a "donate" pile/box. If the clothing is damaged but can be fixed, create a pile for "repair". Items that are damaged beyond repair can be allocated to "discard". Everything else should go into a "keep" pile. Continue until every piece of clothing or accessory has made it into one of the four piles.

Ideally this exercise should free up space and let you assess if the lay-out of your closet works for the items that you're keeping. Do you like to fold clothes for placement onto shelves or into drawers? Or do you prefer to hang most of your garments? Do you need a lot of space for full-length clothes or could you incorporate double hanging shelves to create more capacity? The design need not be fancy but if all you have in your closet is a shelf with one rod, please, please, please head to the local hardware store to get ideas about how you can maximize your storage with some new shelving, drawers, hooks, etc. The Container Store is also an excellent resource (www.containerstore.com).

Next, decide on the best grouping system for your closet. Might it work well to have all of your shirts organized by sleeve length, e.g. tank tops in one section, short-sleeved next, etc? Or will the dressing process go faster if you put work attire in one area and casual wear in another? If you're unsure, try one way, knowing that you can always rearrange it if it doesn't work out. Make a minimal investment in some quality hangers that will give your closet a uniform look and feel while also treating your garments better than thin metal hangers will.

Depending on capacity, accessories such as scarves, handbags, hats, belts, ties, etc. deserve a spot in your clothes closet. Off-season clothes are perfectly welcome in your clothes closet if you can fit them in a container either on the floor or a higher shelf. Whether or not you accommodate your shoes in the clothes closet is a matter of preference and available space. Again, the hardware store is a good resource for accessory storage options, as is Home Port, Bed, Bath & Beyond, and The Container Store.

Whatever you do, don't be afraid of your clothes closet! Take control of what is inside that great space so that the next time you open the door, you'll smile - and quickly grab exactly what you need.