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Organize Your Closet -- Finally

Easy tips to whip your space into shape

by Melissa Kagan ([see more from this expert](#))

Organizing your closet is the kind of chore that you can constantly find excuses to avoid. In fact, it's such an undertaking that it usually takes a traumatic event, like losing your favorite jacket -- or having the closet collapse -- before you actually get to it. But where to begin? Well, there are actually professional closet consultants who can help. We asked one, [Alison Lukes](#), to walk us through a pain-free way to organize a closet.

- Don't try this at home alone. Nobody can talk you into keeping things you don't need more than... you. "Women tend to lose objectivity and end up rationalizing why they're keeping ill-fitting or worn-out clothing," says Lukes. "If you can't afford a consultant, enlist a friend's help for the day." A true friend will tell you that if you actually wear those skin-tight purple suede pants, she won't be walking next to you.
- Divide clothing into three piles. The "keep" pile should consist of clothes that fit and are worn on a frequent basis. The "maybe" pile is reserved for clothes that fit and classic styles that won't go out of [fashion](#). (They may be "maybes" because you don't wear them often.) The third pile is the "time to say goodbye" pile. This is reserved for clothes that don't fit, are worn in or are too scary to be seen in. (Even if it is your lucky seventh-grade [T-shirt](#). This is where your buddy comes in.) Next, you and your friend re-sort the "maybe" pile. There might be a few gems in there that are just waiting to be rediscovered. (This would not include the aforementioned purple suede pants!)
- Sort by season. If you have the luxury of extra space, put your out-of-season clothing in plastic bins and covered hanging racks and store it in a separate area of your house or apartment. Be sure to include moth-repellent cedar to prevent moths from laying eggs in your clothing.
- Sort by color. The reason to organize your closet is not just to make space. The goal is to be able to find your clothes. There is nothing more frustrating than searching for an article of clothing that has gotten lost in the abyss of disorganization. Organize by garment type and color. In other words, keep all shirts hanging together arranged by color. Do the same for skirts, jackets, etc. Sweaters should be folded accordingly as well.
- If you don't have enough closet space, invest in shelving and storage bins. There are several stores with Websites that are strictly dedicated to organizing your home. Two excellent sites are [HoldEverything.com](#) and [ContainerStore.com](#).
- [Shoes](#) take up more space than you think. Lukes recommends the "add-on" shoe rack available at the Container Store. Racks stack together vertically and horizontally so you can adjust how high or low you want them to sit. If you're stacking them under short jackets, you can stack three or four on top of each other. If they're being stored under long dresses, you may only be able to fit a single rack. Tall boots? Stack a single rack so nothing sits on top of the boots and crushes them. Use individual plastic shoe bins for storing out-of-season shoes that you won't be wearing for a while.
- If you decide to use a professional closet consultant, make sure you get an estimate for how much it will cost and how long it will take ahead of time. Don't be afraid to ask questions and make sure you feel comfortable with the person you'll be working with.
- Stick rolled-up magazines in your boots and acid-free tissue paper in your handbags to help them maintain their shape.
- Always take clothes out of dry-cleaning plastic. The chemicals in dry cleaning may turn clothes yellow if the clothes are kept in the plastic too long. If you want to cover your clothing, use a fabric garment bag.
- Have your designer dresses stuffed with paper at the dry cleaner to help them keep their shape and to limit wrinkling.
- Have fun! Get a group involved and arrange for a "swap meet" for everyone to bring over their discards. One girl's trash is another girl's treasure.