

10 Tips for Organizing your Closet

You frantically search through the overstuffed rack of clothing, looking for that long sleeved, white blouse you know you have somewhere. Maybe it's still under the plastic from the drycleaner. Maybe it's jammed between your long overcoat and the pants you wore it with last. Maybe it's in the laundry. Oh, now you remember, your sister borrowed it last month and hasn't returned it yet. Now you find a different blouse you like, but this one doesn't go with the pants you were going to wear. Now you search for the pants you like to wear with the blouse you chose. 25 minutes later, you scabble for your keys and rush out the door without your breakfast - again.

Is this your reality? It doesn't have to be. Here's an alternative.

You get up in the morning; you go to your closet and find the clothes you want to wear right away. It takes less than 5 minutes to put together your outfit. You change and have plenty of time for breakfast, leaving you calm and ready to face the day.

If your closet is over stuffed or you know you have things in there that you haven't worn for a while and are not likely to wear again, it's time for a purge. Take some time and go through your clothes one by one. You need to identify what to keep and what to donate or sell. Here are three tips for helping you purge your closet of clothes you no longer wear or like.

Tip #1) Ask questions.

Ask yourself the following questions to decide what to keep:

- 1) Have I worn this in the last year?
- 2) Do I look good in this?
- 3) Does it fit me well?
- 4) Do I love wearing this?

If you work better by finding what to pass on to someone else, ask yourself these questions:

- 1) Was it more than a year ago that I wore this?
- 2) Could someone else make better use of this than me?
- 3) Is this the wrong size for me now?
- 4) Is this tired/worn/outdated?

Tip #2) Use the reverse hangar trick.

If you are having trouble being honest about what you wear and what you don't, use the reverse hangar trick. Turn all your hangars so that they are in backwards. Give yourself a time limit; 3 months, 6 months - your choice. When you wear something, put it back the right way round. Anything still hanging in reverse after your time limit, you haven't worn.

Tip #3) Be kind to yourself.

Do give yourself some slack on the sizing if you have just had children or have some temporary medical condition that has caused a change in size. But if it was five years since your last child and you still don't fit those favorite old pants, it's time they went.

Now you have clothes you love in your closet. Now it's time to organize them.

Tip #4) The next step is to categorize your clothing. Categories that are generally useful for people are:

- 1) By season
- 2) By length
- 3) By type
- 4) By color

For instance, you can keep all your long hanging items together - long overcoats, long dresses - and your short hanging items together - blouses, skirts. You can further organize, for instance, by separating the long sleeved blouses from the 3/4 sleeve from the short sleeve and then group the like colors or patterns together. It really doesn't matter exactly how you categorize them - as long as you can easily find where to put something away and where to find it when you want to wear it.

Tip #5) If you want to install a new closet system, now is the time to design it. You know the quantity of each type of clothing that you own. A closet designer can now take that information and make the best recommendations based on the clothing that you love.

Tip #6) If you are not doing a complete re-design, keep your long hanging items together. Consider double hanging the short items - over the bar hanging bars can be an inexpensive way to create a double hanging space - but make sure you have enough vertical height to do it before purchasing.

Tip #7) Use shelves or drawers for purses and anything that needs to lie flat. If you are going to use shoe boxes (they do keep the dust off), use clear ones or put a picture of the shoes on the end of the box.

Tip #8) Rearrange for the seasons as needed. Put this season's clothes in the most accessible place in your closet. Put rarely worn things in the back or the sides of the closet.

Tip #9) When you rotate your clothing for the seasons, it's a good time to purge again. Notice anything that you didn't wear this season and let it go before you put it away.

One final tip:

Tip #10) Keep your spare hangars on one spot. It makes it easy to find them when it's time to put the laundry away and it keeps the hanging space looking neat.

Remember, you don't have to implement all these tips at once. Decide on one thing to do first. It could be that you decide from now on, you'll put your blouses on the right hand side of your closet and, as you wear them and launder them, you put them away there. Slowly your blouses will all end up in the one spot. (And any blouses that are still amongst everything else - you're not wearing, so you know what to do with those - right?).

Now - enjoy your relaxed mornings!