

LIFE IN JENERAL

A JOYFUL GUIDE TO
ORGANIZING YOUR HOME
AND CREATING THE SPACE FOR
WHAT MATTERS MOST

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SETTING YOUR INTENTION

So let me ask again: What *do* you want from your home?

If you've never answered that question for yourself, this is the space to do so, right here and right now. Maybe you want to grab a pen and write down what comes to mind. Take your time. Really sit with it. Because finding your heartfelt answer to this question is well worth the intentional pause. In fact, I believe it can change your life.

Please note: I'm not asking about design goals or styling here, though I do believe beautiful aesthetics have an important role to play in loving your home. In this moment, I'm asking what you want your home to *feel* like when you wake up in the morning and step into your daily routine.

What in your home makes you feel happy?

What's most important to you in a home environment?

What kind of lifestyle do you want your living spaces and belongings to support?

What kind of environment would make you feel equipped for the work you need to do each day?

What kind of home would support quality time, both with yourself and with the people you love?

KEEPING PERSPECTIVE WITH KEEPSAKES

If sentimental objects, keepsakes, or passed-down heirlooms have been tricky decision-making territory for you in the past, don't forget to ask yourself what intangible worth (i.e., good feelings that contribute to your well-being) they bring to your life. Are they actively bringing you joy? Do they remind you of the extraordinary moment or the irreplaceable person they're meant to represent?

Here are some other helpful questions and prompts to use when deciding whether or not to keep objects with emotional ties:

-
- Are there any other feelings wrapped up in this object besides joy and affection? Guilt for not using or displaying it or letting it remain in a state of disrepair? If feelings of shame, regret, or disappointment emerge, the item could be holding you in the past. Look a little closer.
 - Will it be stored or will you use or display it? If the former, strongly consider giving it away to someone who would enjoy it, or donating it to charity.
 - If the item feels essential to save, ask yourself *why*. Your answer should line up with the person you want to be and the home atmosphere you seek to create.
 - Are there other objects in your possession that serve the same emotional purpose (e.g., make you think of the same person, place, or experience) but take up less physical space? Consider focusing on those and letting the bigger objects go.
 - Plan for the space you have today. If sentimental items are taking up needed space, capture the feelings they offer through photographs or writing, and narrow items down to your true favorites (e.g., to one memory box instead of ten).
-

FILLING THE VOID SO WE DON'T FEEL THE VOID

What does an unhealthy relationship with shopping look like? Some of the red flags might be:

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- clothes on hangers with the tags still on them
 - shopping bags or Amazon boxes lining the closet floor or entryway with the purchases still inside
 - an inability to resist the lure of a "sale" even if you're not looking for anything in particular
 - excessive credit card debt
 - a constant yo-yo between "retail therapy" and buyer's remorse
-

Here's a little exercise that can help. Find an activity that you enjoy that doesn't involve acquiring any new possessions, or—an even better challenge—that doesn't involve spending money at all. For me, there's nothing like time outdoors to ground myself. I need those deep breaths in the open air. But this practice in finding simple gratification could look like anything that rejuvenates you or brings you (or someone else!) joy:

-
- hiking the trails near your home
 - taking your pup to a dog park and watching him or her play
 - hunting through that game cabinet and pulling out a long-lost puzzle or game for a fun night with friends or family
 - reading a book on your shelf that you've always intended to read but never actually have
 - scheduling a monthly coffee-on-the-back-porch date with a good friend
 - doing YouTube yoga videos in your living room
 - turning up the music for a kitchen dance party
 - going for a drive, rolling down all the windows, and blasting your favorite song
 - getting a buddy to volunteer a few hours a month with you at a local charity
 - spreading a blanket in the grass at the park and picking shapes out of the clouds
 - surprising your neighbor with a fresh batch of cookies
-

MAKE A PRACTICAL PLAN THAT FITS YOUR LIFESTYLE

You might be wondering *Where should I start?* or *What order is best for tackling the rooms in my home?* I have a few rules of thumb to consider when deciding how to order your home-organizing plan:

-
- Never start with your home office (and paper-filing) or your garage. The types and amount of clutter these two spaces tend to attract typically take more time and energy to work through. It's too easy to get bogged down, distracted, and overwhelmed by starting in these spaces. I've seen it derail organizing efforts one too many times. Whatever rooms you store them in, save paper files, memorabilia, and photo organization for very last.
 - Start with a small victory or two. Small spaces like a cleaning-supply closet, spice cabinet, or joy (versus junk!) drawers are great spots to gain confidence and momentum in the process. Plus, checking a few quick wins off the list is just so fun and energizing.
 - Prioritize the spaces with the highest-ranking pain points in your home, *unless* they are the home office, paper files, or garage. (Just trust me on this!)
-

DISCARD AND DONATE

When you have removed all the items from the space and sorted them into categories, it's time to decide what to *discard* (recycling anything you can and tossing what you can't) or *donate* (giving away anything in good repair that someone else could use). This step, which I sometimes call *purging*, is where those mental and emotional barriers to organizing are most often triggered. But asking yourself the right questions (and answering honestly) can really help.

Ask yourself these questions when working through clutter in any room of the home:

-
- Do I love it, use it, or need it?
 - Do I have duplicates?
 - Is it broken beyond repair?
 - Does it belong to me? (If borrowed, it's probably time to give it back!)
 - Would I want it if I didn't already have it? (Tip: Look up the *psychology of ownership* or the *endowment effect*.)
 - Is it expired?
 - Would I buy it again?
 - Am I saving it for someone else?
 - Do I have the space for this where I live today?
 - If it hadn't been brought to my attention, would I even have missed it?
 - Is it serving the lifestyle I want to create?
 - Is it critical to save? If so, why? (The answer to *why* should serve your life in the present.)
-

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Some of the most frequent questions we get asked at Life in Jeneral are about what kind of products to use for containing. Visit www.lifeinjeneral.com to see our current favorites and where we source them.

MAINTAIN

Once each item and each category has a home, you will always know where to return them when done with use. When organizational systems are in place, it's really not hard to maintain them, but it does require commitment. Small daily habits make all the difference.

SUPPLIES TO GET STARTED

So now that you're getting down to it, what do you need on hand to get going? Really, not much! Here's what I'd recommend having on hand:

-
- *trash bags* (for collecting and carting off discard, donate, or recycle piles)
 - *large bins or boxes* (to separate items that you're sorting into categories), or
 - *blue painter's tape* and a *Sharpie marker* (to mark off zones on the floor for sorting items or to use in place of sticky notes for identifying zones in a space before you put items back)
 - *a label maker* (doesn't have to be fancy!) or *paint/chalk pens* (for labeling)
-

bathroom

COMMON PROBLEMS

- a lack of storage space
 - underutilized tall or deep storage spaces
 - expired items
 - nearly empty (or half-used and abandoned) product containers
 - messy shelves (due to a lack of containment or bins)
 - unrelated or unlike items in the same space without rhyme or reason
 - duplicates
 - overfilled drawers and cabinets
 - cluttered counter spaces
-

HOW TO CATEGORIZE AND SORT

Despite having smaller square footage than most other rooms in a home, bathrooms pack an impressive amount of products in a small space. Once you've pulled everything out of your bathroom, you can begin to identify the larger categories that make up your bathroom's inventory and sort through your items, grouping like items together. Every home is different and you will likely need to create categories that are unique to your routine. Adapt or add to the categories listed below so that they work for you:

- | | | |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| • face and skin care products | • makeup | • first aid |
| • hair care products | • travel products | • heat tools for hair |
| • oral care products | • bath and shower products | • shaving products |
| • medicines, vitamins, and supplements | • linens | • feminine care products |

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Many items that take up space in the bathroom are duplicates, free samples, or items that were purchased once and have since been abandoned or forgotten. As you're working through your bathroom inventory, pause on each item and ask yourself:

-
- Do I currently use this product?
 - Is this part of my regular routine?
 - Do I actually need this?
 - Why did I buy this in the first place?
-

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jeneral guidelines FOR PLACEMENT IN THE BATHROOM

IN CABINETS OR ON SHELVES

- linens and towels
- shampoos and conditioners
- medicines
- tall bottles and jars
- makeup bags
- lotions
- perfumes

IN BASKETS AND BINS

- small towels
- bath soaps
- face washes
- toilet paper
- stockpiled products

IN SHALLOW DRAWERS

- toothpastes
- toothbrushes
- cotton products
- shaving products
- makeup
- hair ties and accessories

IN DEEP DRAWERS

- hot hair tools
- toilet paper
- tall bottles and jars
- face washes
- bulky gadgets

ON THE COUNTERTOP

- hand soap
- a toothbrush holder
- diffusers

primary closet and bedroom

COMMON PROBLEMS

Whether you have a small closet with limited storage or a walk-in with an abundance of breathing room, the two major factors contributing to a hot-mess closet tend to be the same across the board: (1) people don't like the actual space, how the closet's arranged (or isn't)—they don't know how to make their particular space work for their own clothes, accessories, and other storage—and (2) they don't love or feel confident about what's *in* their closet.

As a result, here's what tends to manifest:

-
- overcrowded clothing rods
 - overflow of items
 - piles of garments building up on the floor
 - wrinkled items
 - tangled hanging clothes
 - an inability to find things
 - inadequate storage for accessories
 - messy shelves
 - items that don't suit your lifestyle
-

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Honor where you are today. Show yourself kindness in how you choose to fill up your present. And trust that tomorrow will be better for it. Because it will be.

Questions to Ask as You Work Through Your Closet

- Do I love it, wear it, and feel good in it?
- Does this outfit fit my current body type?
- Does this represent something I would feel proud of and confident to be seen in?
- Does this fit my current lifestyle?
- When was the last time I wore this?
- Do I need multiple of these?
- Would I buy this again?

WHAT TO DISCARD VS. DONATE

If you're not sure whether something should be donated or just tossed from your closet space, here's what I suggest:

Discard

- ripped or torn items
- stretched-out clothing
- discolored clothing
- shoes with holes
- shoes with broken straps

Donate

- unnecessary duplicates
- free T-shirts that you don't wear
- shoes that no longer fit
- shoes that are uncomfortable
- bridesmaids' dresses
- old work uniforms
- old costumes

Sell

If you have items of value that you'd rather sell than donate, there are a ton of online resources for that. Check www.lifeinjenral.com for recommendations of great places to sell your clothing online. You can also see if there are consignment shops in your town that would take the pieces on.

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FOR CLOTHING PLACEMENT

ON RODS

If your closet capacity doesn't allow for all of the items listed here to be hung, don't worry. Many of the items can live, folded, in other areas of the closet, as space allows:

- tops, blouses, and shirts
- jeans
- khakis
- trousers and dress pants
- skirts
- dresses
- jackets and heavy coats (on coat hangers)
- suits and tuxedos (on suit hangers)

ON SHELVES

With the proper containment, these items store well on shelves:

- shoes
- jeans
- sweatshirts
- sweaters
- hats
- purses
- jewelry

IN DRAWERS

Whether you have a dresser built into your closet space or in your room, here are the items that should be folded and placed in drawers:

- underwear and boxers
- socks
- athletic tops and bottoms
- pajamas
- swimwear

kitchen

COMMON PROBLEMS

Don't get discouraged if you find that more than one emotional barrier is uncovered when it comes to organizing your kitchen. Most people have a clutter issue in this space (even if it's hidden behind cabinet doors). Start with one cabinet and keep moving. Some of the most common things I see that contribute to an overwhelming and underutilized kitchen space are:

-
- chaotic catch-all drawers
 - dishes and glasses stacked precariously high
 - overflowing utensil drawers
 - Tupperware with no lids
 - items shoved in cupboards
 - tumbling pot-and-pan storage
 - categories of items mixed together
 - item placement that disrupts the kitchen layout and flow
 - "dead space" in deep cabinets and corner cabinets
 - seldom-used bulky appliances gathering dust
-

DISCARD VS. DONATE

If you're not sure whether something should be donated or just tossed, here are some suggestions to consider when working through your kitchen and pantry items:

Discard

- expired food, canned goods, or spices
 - any food or kitchen item that no longer fits with your lifestyle or diet
 - melted spatulas or cooking utensils
 - scratched nonstick pots and skillets
 - cracked or chipped mugs and dishes
 - sugar that has clumped and hardened
 - pasta that is more than a year old
 - flour that is more than a year old
 - baking soda that has been open for over a year
 - canned vegetables that are more than two years old
-

Donate or Recycle

- unnecessary kitchen tools and gadgets (excessive amount of cookie-cutter shapes, apple and avocado peelers, etc.)
 - unused or seldom-used appliances
 - overabundance of dishes or Tupperware
 - plastic storage bins and containers, if moving toward more sustainable products in your kitchen
 - duplicate pots and pans, or appliances that serve the same purpose as ones you already have (i.e., let go of the rice cooker if you also have an Instant Pot)
-

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FOR PLACEMENT IN THE KITCHEN

THE CONSUMABLES ZONE

This is the area where your food is stored (i.e., your refrigerator and freezer area and cabinets containing food). All food should live in or near this zone along with the following food storage—related items:

- Tupperware
- storage containers
- plastic wrap
- parchment paper
- tin foil
- plastic bags

THE NONCONSUMABLES ZONE

Everyday dishes and/or nonconsumable items should be kept in easy-to-reach areas surrounding your sink, dishwasher or refrigerator:

Upper Cabinets

- plates
- bowls
- glasses and mugs

LIJ TIP: For small spaces or cabinet shelves that are too high, utilize risers to separate your dishes.

Upper Drawers

- silverware
- serving utensils
- cloths and hand towels
- small kitchen gadgets

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THE CLEANING ZONE

This is the space near your dishwasher (if you have one) and sink, where you clean up your mess after a meal. We typically keep these items under the sink:

- cleaning supplies
- dishwasher detergent
- trash bags
- sponges
- or pods
- gloves
- dish towels

LIJ TIP: A lazy Susan is ideal for keeping under-the-kitchen-sink items organized and accessible. This means no more layering of cleaning supplies; every bottle or container can have a "front-row" spot and be easily located.

THE PREPARATION ZONE

This area is the space on your counter or island where you do most of your cooking preparation. This could be chopping, baking, mixing, etc. These common items should be kept close by:

- cutting boards
- colanders and strainers
- whisks
- mixing bowls
- measuring cups
- sharp knives
- serving bowls
- rolling pins
- mixing spoons
- graters, zesters, and peelers
- cookie cutters
- mixing gadgets

THE COOKING ZONE

This area is where your oven, stovetop, and microwave are commonly found. Here, you want to utilize your lower cabinets and drawers to store all essential cookware and bakeware.

Different items belong in cabinets and drawers. Here's a quick breakdown below:

Lower Cabinets

- baking sheets
- pots and pans
- casserole dishes

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Upper Drawers

- spices (if space allows)
- cooking thermometers
- spatulas and cooking tools

APPLIANCE HUB

This area will vary by a household's makeup and needs, but could include small appliances that are less frequently used or child-specific products, etc. Appliances often get shoved into the higher and hard-to-reach cabinets, making them a pain to retrieve and less likely to be used. Small appliances should be placed on shelves in a tall, pantry-like cabinet or in your lower cabinets. Whether these items make more sense in your preparation or cooking zones, the important note is to keep them together as your space allows.

- blenders
- electric mixers
- food processors
- waffle makers
- slow cookers
- electric skillet
- toasters

LIJ TIP: Utilize bins to keep all tools, cords, and attachments together with their respective appliances.

BACKSTOCK AND ENTERTAINMENT

Do you love to entertain? Then you probably have lots of extra dishes and party and outdoor-barbecue supplies. If you have an overflow of party dishes, paper goods, and extra dinnerware for large gatherings, here are a few tips on where and how to store them:

-
- Store like items together. For example, if you have themed party supplies, you'll want to keep all of them together in the same location.
 - Create bins for each theme: birthday parties, paper cups, plates, party napkins, and so on.
 - Don't keep these items with everyday essentials. Find them a separate home.
-

styling your kitchen
FUNCTIONAL BEAUTY

One key way to enhance your kitchen space without adding new clutter is to turn an item you already have on hand into an artful display. Try one or two of these ideas (but not all of them at once) to keep a clean aesthetic.

-
- If you have a large kitchen island, a pretty bowl or decorative tray can make a stunning centerpiece. And there's not much that beats the natural beauty of a vase of fresh flowers.
 - Lean antique or decorative cutting boards against the countertop wall to add warmth and a personal touch without taking up space.
 - Let fruit add color to your space. A ceramic bowl offering fruit never goes out of style. Just be sure to place it in an area that won't disrupt the cooking zone.
 - If you have open wall space, try arranging your favorite cookbooks on floating acrylic shelves that leave the full covers in view. Beautifully designed cookbooks are perfect for adding a playful pop of color.
-

CREATE ZONES FOR YOUR PANTRY

Zoning your pantry allows you to clearly see what food you have and what needs restocking. It also provides a better, more efficient method for putting groceries away, no matter who did the shopping. Everything has a home and it's clearly marked! Here are the steps to zoning your pantry.

1. In order to create the proper zones for your pantry, you need to determine the food and ingredient groupings that suit your lifestyle and diet. Take all items out of the pantry and group them together (on the counter, not in the pantry yet!). Use sticky notes or painter's tape to plan out your zones before putting the items back in.

Here are some of the most common zones I like to create in pantries to get you started:

Zone One: breakfast items

Zone Two: snacks

Zone Three: condiments

Zone Four: pastas and grains

Zone Five: baking items

Zone Six: canned goods

Zone Seven: sauces and soup

2. Designate the appropriate zone for each category based on how often you use those items. Place items you use every day in easy-to-reach areas. Remember to leave extra room for growth.
3. Decide what containers are best suited for each category and place them in their bins.
4. Label your bins and put them in place, and place your items back in the pantry by zone.

DECANTING 101

When I first arrive on the scene in a home, most pantries house a mismatched jumble of oddly shaped boxes, containers, and packaging that either don't fit well on the shelves, don't keep your food fresh, or both. Decanting dry goods into airtight containers solves both of these issues, not to mention that it protects food from pests. Plus it makes it easy to see when supplies are running low and, by keeping items in containers sized to fit your storage areas, you'll be able to make better use of your space.

What to Decant

- | | | |
|----------|----------|-------------------------|
| • flours | • nuts | • spices |
| • sugars | • grains | • snacks, crackers, and |
| • pastas | • rice | chips |
| | • beans | |

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Steps to Remember

- Choose the appropriate-size airtight jar for the items you're decanting.
- Label the front or top of the container. Use a label maker or chalk or paint pens, which work great for this purpose.
- Write the expiration date on a piece of tape or use a label maker and place the label on the bottom or back of the container.
- If the item you are decanting requires instructions to prepare, make sure to write them on the bottom or back of the container. You can also cut out the instructions and tape them to the back of the container. (For example, on the rice container, write the cook time and the water-to-rice ratio needed.)

RACK AND CART PANTRIES

Two great options for adding pantry storage space to small kitchens are over-the-door racks and utility carts. Racks are an easy addition to any door, providing storage for your items without taking up space in the room. Carts can have bins of multiple depths, which make it easy to store containers securely and keep your items within their designated categories. When organizing pantry racks or carts:

- Zone items by level to the best of your ability.
- Use tall, acrylic containers for your baking supplies so that you can easily identify contents at a glance.
- Add labels on the top and the side of the containers.
- Make sure you select containers that have secure lids if you'll be picking them up from the top.

CABINET PANTRIES

Standard Pantry Cabinet (without Mobile Shelves) Tips

Here are some tips for organizing your pantry cabinet!

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- In this type of pantry, staggering items behind each other is not functional for day-to-day finding, pulling, and replacing items. Instead, items should be zoned and placed in deep bins that are easy to pull down and have plenty of room for storing your items. In this situation, the bins serve almost like drawers.
- Again, place the most-frequented items on the most accessible shelves; it just makes life easier.
- Utilize lazy Susans, if space permits, for sauces, condiments, or canned goods.
- Don't forget to label those bins! This step will be especially helpful in a tighter, less flexible pantry situation.

Pull-Out Pantry Cabinet (with Mobile Shelves) Tips

Pull-out pantry cabinets can utilize all of the same tools as the standard pantry cabinet, but they also allow for a few more tricks:

- Since you are able to pull the cabinets out, there is more accessibility, so you can easily place items in the front and back.
- You can place the most-frequented items closer to the front of the rolling shelf and less-used items or backstock toward the back.

THE FRIDGE AND FREEZER

The refrigerator and freezer may seem like easy areas to skip when organizing because all the goods are conveniently hidden behind closed doors. But trust me, once you have an organized fridge and freezer you'll wonder why you never did it before. With labeled zones in place, putting away groceries, cooking meals, or even grabbing a snack gets a lot easier, and more pleasant too.

DETERMINING YOUR FRIDGE ZONES

By categorizing your food items into zones, you'll be able to create more storage, find things faster, and easily maintain order in a space where new inventory rotates in and out on the daily. These are the four typical fridge zones:

1. **The cool zone:** The area where your beverages, juice, milk, creamers, and bread go. Typically on the top shelf of the fridge.
2. **The colder zone:** The area where general cold foods like yogurt, deli meat, dips, leftovers, etc., go. Typically the second shelf from the top.
3. **The coldest zone:** The area where you should store your meats, fish, eggs, and poultry. These are typically best stored on one of the middle shelves.
4. **Bins and drawers:** Designated zones that have already been created at the bottom of most fridges. Place your salads, cheeses, fruits, and vegetables in these bins and drawers.

Things to Remember

- You don't have to put everything in the fridge! If you have an excess amount of soft drinks or water bottles, store your backstock in the pantry and replenish when needed.
- Label! To help keep your space organized, it's important to label any bins or containers so you can easily locate them, and remember where to put that next round of groceries.
- Implement the use of bins where you can for easy containment.

CONTAIN SO YOU CAN MAINTAIN

If your fridge doesn't have built-in compartments for your various categories, that's okay! These are our favorite bins to create your zones with:

Linus Fridge Bins Wine Holders

These are great for:

- water bottles
- wine bottles

Linus Deep Fridge Bins

These are great for:

- juice boxes
- kids' snacks
- dressings

The Container Store Fridge Organization Bins Starter Kit

These are great for:

- individual dips
- grab-and-go snacks
- salad kits

LIJ TIP: The two crisper drawers in your fridge are meant to store foods that perish more quickly. This includes fruits, vegetables, and leafy greens like spinach and arugula.

kids' spaces

ORGANIZING THE PLAY AREA

Whatever the kids' play area looks like in a home—whether separate from or incorporated into a child's bedroom—I encounter many of the same problems:

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- toys all over the floor, in every room of the house
 - items shoved into the same bin without rhyme or reason
 - messy, unkempt shelves
 - toys getting lost easily
 - no real clean-up routine
 - piles building up in random areas
 - tripping over toys
-

CATEGORIZING PLAY ITEMS

It may be a little meticulous up front, but with so many small parts and pieces making up a toy-filled play area, taking the time to pull out, categorize, and sort everything in the space is especially important in order to understand the full breadth of stuff your kids really have, and to identify duplicates. Key categories to help make sense of the mess are:

-
- stuffed animals
 - dolls
 - figurines
 - books
 - puzzles and board games
 - coloring and art supplies
 - building blocks
 - cars, trains, and planes
 - dress-up items and costumes
 - bulky toys and sets
-

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FOR PLACEMENT IN THE PLAY AREA

Here's what I recommend for placement of your newly categorized items:

On Shelves

- books
- board games
- puzzles
- dollhouses
- stuffed animals
- display dolls
- bulky toys

In Drawers

(Make sure any items that aren't age-appropriate for your children are up high/out of reach.)

- markers
- crayons
- scissors
- colored pencils
- stickers
- glue
- paint supplies
- beads
- glitter

In Baskets and Bins

- building blocks
- Legos
- small dolls
- Play-Doh
- train tracks

In Tall Baskets

- stuffed animals
- larger toys
- balls

Storage Systems or Pieces of Furniture

- puzzle racks
- dress-up clothes
- craft carts

ORGANIZING THE KIDS' CLOSET

We all know kids grow out of clothes and age out of toys so quickly! When you set up solid organizing systems within appropriate closet zones, they'll evolve right along with your kids over the years.

Common Problems in Kids' Bedrooms and Closets

- inventory that is constantly changing as kids grow
- inability to find things
- trying to force everything into a small closet
- inadequate storage for little accessories
- tangled hanging clothes
- piles building up on the floor
- messy shelves

CATEGORIZE AND SORT

Here's how I group items for a kids' closet:

- *Hanging clothes.* Categorize and sort into tank tops, short sleeves, long sleeves, dresses, pants, skirts, jeans, jackets, and sweaters.
- *Sweaters.* For sweaters you want to store on a shelf or in a drawer (as opposed to hanging), make sure you put them together and sort by color.
- *Folded and placed in drawers.* Categorize and sort undergarments, socks, tights, pajamas, swimsuits, etc.
- *Shoes.* Sort based on shoe type (e.g., athletic shoes, casual sneakers, sandals, dress shoes, school shoes, etc.).
- *Accessories.* This includes hats, sunglasses, purses, jewelry, hair accessories, etc. Categorize and sort into piles.

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KEEP, DONATE, OR DISCARD

Here are some quick tips on knowing what to keep around—and what you should definitely be tossing.

Discard

- ripped or torn items
- stretched-out clothing
- stained clothing
- shoes with broken straps
- shoes with holes

Donate

- unnecessary duplicates
- old costumes
- free T-shirts that are not worn

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FOR PLACEMENT IN A KIDS' CLOSET

ON RODS

Don't worry if your space doesn't allow for all items to be hung; they can live in other areas of the closet if space doesn't permit! Use rod dividers to make it easy to find items quickly. Typically, I hang:

- tops, blouses, and shirts
- dresses
- jackets
- jeans
- trousers and dress pants
- formal wear

IN BINS ON SHELVES

If the closet has a lot of open shelf space, consider storing these items folded on the shelves:

- sweaters
- jeans
- shoes
- hats
- accessories
- hand-me-downs for siblings

LJJ TIP: If you're planning on growing your family or have more than one child, add a designated bin to the closet for clothes your child has outgrown that you want to hold on to for the next child.

IN DRAWERS

Whether there's a dresser built into the closet space or one in the bedroom itself, these are the items that should be folded and placed in drawers:

- underwear
- socks
- tights
- pajamas
- swimsuits

space-saving tips IN THE KIDS' CLOSET

Many of the methods to maximize space in an adult closet work magic in a kids' closet as well:

- *Switching to matching hangers.* And yes, space-saving slimline velvet hangers come specially sized for children's clothing too!
- *Categorizing and color coordinating hanging clothing.*
- *Creating compartmentalization.* Don't forget those expandable drawer dividers!
- *File-folding clothing.* Find tutorials at www.lifeinjeneral.com.
- *Using labeled bins and baskets* to store seasonal clothing, clothing to grow into, extra linens, memorabilia, and toys on shelves.
- *Utilizing an over-the-door rack* in small closets.

home office

CATEGORIZING YOUR OFFICE ITEMS

By now you know the drill. Pull everything out and group like items together. If you're having a hard time breaking down the categories in this space beyond the blanket "office supplies," here's a basic list of categories to help:

Clerical Items

- pencils
- pens
- markers
- Wite-Out
- highlighters
- Sharpies
- erasers
- glue
- paper clips
- binder clips
- calculators
- printer ink

Paper Products

- printer paper
- notepads
- Post-it notes
- postage stamps
- envelopes

Gadgets

- staplers
- tape dispensers
- hole punchers
- staple removers
- pencil sharpeners

Electronics

- desktop computers
- laptops
- monitors
- chargers
- cords
- printers

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DEEP DRAWERS ARE BEST FOR . . .

- bulky devices
- printer paper
- lined paper
- notebooks

STOCKING YOUR SUPPLY CLOSET

If you have the storage, maintaining an office-supply closet (or set of shelves in a multipurpose closet) with backstock is recommended. You don't want to have to run to the store each time you need to create a new file or folder, you need an envelope to send a letter in the mail, or you run out of printer paper, especially when you're on a deadline! Additionally, many office items come in bulk (and can save you money when purchased that way), but it's likely not the most efficient use of space to keep it all in the desk area.

For containing items in an office-supply closet (a spot that's typically less visible in your home), I recommend using whatever you already have on hand rather than spending money on new products. When clearly labeled, empty plastic shoeboxes or old bins that you can empty out will work just fine for storing backstock:

The Best Office Items to Buy in Bulk

- printer paper
- file folders
- tape
- notepads
- pens
- envelopes
- staples
- printer ink
- label tape

garage

WHAT TO STORE IN YOUR GARAGE

Even once you've determined the main priorities for what your garage will store or what you'll use it for, it can still be tricky to wade through the amount of inventory you've collected in the space. After you pull everything out of the garage, make a list for yourself of what's most important for you to use in the space and then begin building your categories around that list. Once everything is sorted into categories you'll more easily be able to see what you have duplicates of and what can be discarded, donated, or consolidated for storage or use elsewhere:

Common Items Stored in the Garage

- vehicles
- bicycles
- scooters
- kids' cars
- wagons
- lawn chairs
- beach gear
- sports equipment
- cleaning supplies
- household backstock
- spare refrigerators
- tools
- electrical cords
- light bulbs
- ladders
- gardening tools
- lawn mowers
- seasonal decor
- memorabilia

Because most garages are not climate-controlled, the items stored within need to be able to tolerate humidity and sometimes extreme temperatures:

Items That Should Not Be Stored in the Garage

- clothing, bedding, linens, or plush toys (fabric items are susceptible to mold)
- flammable items (e.g., propane tanks, fuel cans, oil-soaked rags, etc.)
- food or beverage items that cannot withstand heat
- pet food (this is an invitation for pests)
- books or photos

PICKING A BIN

When deciding which containers to store items in, take into consideration which garage items are more vulnerable to the elements. Airtight bins and containers offer some protection from mildew- and rust-inducing moisture, while open crates are more convenient for keeping heartier outdoor toys easy to grab. Here are some guidelines for what to store in each kind of bin.

Airtight Containers

- tools that rust easily
- larger kitchen appliances that are used only periodically
- seasonal decor and lights

Clear Bins with Lids (Not Necessarily Airtight)

- workout ropes, bands, and weights
- household supplies
- cleaning supplies
- building supplies (extra tiles, etc.)
- memorabilia

Open Crates

- sports equipment
- kids' toys
- beach toys
- household backstock items

jeneral guidelines
FOR ZONING YOUR GARAGE

Zoning a garage can be daunting, but I promise that it's worth it! Here are some guidelines for making that space work for you.

HOUSEHOLD MAINTENANCE ITEMS

Store these items on higher shelves or stationary shelving units in an area you won't access often, saving prime real estate for more frequently used items:

- hardware
- tools
- extra building materials
- light bulbs
- backstock supplies

OUTDOOR GAMES AND BEACH GEAR

Keep these objects on the side walls of the garage so they can easily be transferred in and out of your car and back into place:

- sand toys
- ice chests
- ladder golf sets
- beach chairs
- umbrellas
- large Jenga blocks
- life vests
- wagons

GARDENING SUPPLIES

Store these closer to where you pull into the garage so they are easily accessible as you come and go:

- shovels
- seeds
- rakes
- gloves
- watering cans
- soil

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BULKY OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT

Store large pieces of equipment like these near the garage door and as close to the garage wall as possible so that it's easy to take outdoors, but it doesn't get in the way of pulling your vehicle in and out of the garage:

- lawn mowers
- leaf blowers
- ladders
- motorbikes
- bicycles
- generators

SEASONAL DECOR AND MEMORABILIA

Since these items are used less frequently, place them on higher shelves or in overhead storage:

- holiday lights
- holiday ornaments
- yard decor
- tree stands
- flags
- wreaths
- birthday decor
- family memorabilia

SMALL SPORTING GOODS

Store these items against the walls (whether on a utility track or shelving unit) close to the car for easy retrieval and replacement:

- bats
- clubs
- rackets
- sports balls
- shoes
- mitts

ADDING WALL STORAGE

Garage wall space is prime real estate for storage. As an alternative to putting up shelving units that take up square footage, consider investing in a utility track to store your bulkier items and tools.

WALL HOOKS

Wall hooks make it easy to get a wide range of sporting goods and equipment off the garage floor. My favorite way to utilize hooks are the variously sized equipment hooks that attach to a utility track or a slat wall. Items to store on these hooks include:

- tennis rackets
- lawn and beach chairs
- strollers
- bats
- golf clubs
- bicycles and tricycles
- helmets
- scooters
- beach umbrellas

trouble spots and solutions

THE JOY DRAWER

How can you take your drawer from junk to joy? Follow the Life in Jeneral method for sorting, purging, and containing, and then restock the drawer only with frequently used items you'd like to be available at a moment's notice, such as:

- utility scissors
- batteries
- a flashlight
- Scotch tape
- measuring tape
- rubber bands
- two to three pens
- small notepad
- Sharpie markers
- stamps
- checkbook

RESOURCES

Keep making space for what matters most . . .

Whether your journey in organizing your home has just begun or you've been at it awhile, I want to continue to be a resource to you along the way. At www.lifeinjeneral.com you'll find a comprehensive hub of fresh and updated resources at your fingertips, including product recommendations, video tutorials, tips on organizing specialized spaces, and so much more. And follow [@lifeinjeneral](https://www.instagram.com/lifeinjeneral) on Instagram for your daily dose of positive organizing energy and inspiration. I can't wait to keep growing with you!

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