

SPACE MANAGEMENT

Making the most of your home's storage space



Making use of a garage's vertical space can clear the way for those vehicles looking for a home. System designed by Control the Clutter.

What would make your home a better place to live? Oftentimes it's the little things that make a big difference, one of which appeals to the majority of homeowners: more storage space.

While finding that space may include an addition to the home, most professional organizers will suggest looking at the space you have and how you are using it before investing in additional square footage.

"Storage space is valuable," says Cari Brenek, owner of Control the Clutter. "And yet most of us waste the space we have on things we don't love or will never use again."

Whether it's a vacuum cleaner that still works but you have replaced anyway, or the cappuccino machine you used only once, these items generally end up in a dumping space—a space that could be used for something else.

The dumping grounds may vary from household to household, but the common areas include kitchen cabinets, the garage and a closet. And small

items may wind up in the queen of catch-all spaces, the infamous kitchen junk drawer.

"One of the keys to good space management is to only store things that are really worth the space," says Brenek. "Unless you just have an abundance of

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storage areas, I don't recommend saving anything you might need eventually but can easily afford to replace when that time comes."

Declutter seems to be the buzz word in organization. But so long as there's more than one person in the household, one man's clutter is another man's treasure. "If you actually spend time in a house, realistically it's impossible to completely declutter the space," says Brenek. "The trick is to control it by having a home for everything, and then by

putting things back in their places every time you use them."

Julie Hibbs with Squared Away agrees. "You know those wedding gifts you've never used? Get rid of them," Hibbs advises. "The kitchen is generally the room in most need of organization because it is one of the most multifunctional rooms in the house. It isn't just for cooking. It's the mail-deposit room, the office where you pay the bills, and the study where the children do their homework."

Hibbs recommends first discarding unneeded items and then putting theme items together. Baking goods with baking goods, seasonings with seasonings, check-paying supplies with the bills. After that task is complete, assign areas for the different themes. "Sometimes a simple basket for a group of items will solve the problem," says Hibbs. Other storage issues may require some adjustment to cabinets or purchasing some storage accessories.

George Fleetwood with Kitchen Solvers has worked with hundreds of homeowners to develop a stylish and ergonomic plan for their kitchens. In his years of experience, Fleetwood finds that the biggest organizational problem in the kitchen involves the lower cabinets. "Items stored in these areas are hard to see and difficult to reach," he says. "After a while, the items in the lower cabinets are never used and the space is wasted. Meanwhile, the top cabinets are too full."

Fleetwood says some of the organization issues could be dealt with during the cabinetry design process, but problem areas on existing cabinets generally can be handled with cabinet accessories such as roll-out shelves, Lazy Susans and drawer organization systems. "I rec-

commend a lot of Rev-A-Shelf custom storage products to our clients. The trick is to use all the space in the best possible way."

Kitchens may be notorious for collecting clutter, but there is another space that ranks even higher on the dumping-ground scale: the garage. "It's the classic riddle," says Randy Bellard, president of GarageTek in Houston. "Why would someone keep his \$45,000 luxury car parked in the driveway? Because the garage is filled with worthless junk."

If Bellard has his way, cars will go back into where they belong. "We're doing extreme makeovers to create the world's cleanest garages," Bellard says. "The garage will no longer be the accepted collective dumping ground of the home, but an attractive, highly functional, custom-designed room of the house."

GarageTek tapped into this growing garage trend five years ago with its revolutionary garage organization system. Its storage system creates a neat, clean and usable space in the garage, clearing the way for boats, motorcycles, lawn care equipment and recreational pastimes like woodworking or exercising.

A typical system includes high-performance lockable cabinets, shelving, storage chests, activity racks and accessories.

Following are three tips for organizing the garage, or any room in the home:

1) Clear out what you don't need or use. The garage shouldn't be the final resting place for damaged appliances or unused household items.

2) Use vertical space. Check out the organization systems, like Garage Tek or others, that are on the market. (Be careful to choose those that are easy to install, or make installation arrangements.)

3) Group together items accordingly: car tools, gardening implements, sporting goods. Assign a specific area for each set of items and label areas, as well as any appropriate containers, making them easily recognizable and accessible. Maintaining zones will help keep the garage neat and organized.

Whether it's the kitchen, garage or your closet, a cluttered area equals stress. Becoming more organized and maximizing your home's storage space can help you live a more stress-free life.1

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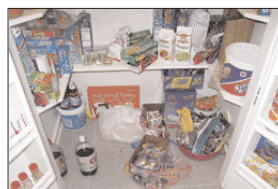


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It is January and you've promised yourself this is the year that you'll get organized. With today's busy schedules it is no wonder there are so many in need of organizational help. Squared Away is a member of the National Association of Professional Organizers and has been organizing homes in Houston for over six years. They can organize your home; kitchen, closets, garage, attic, home office, photographs and more. With a free hour of consultation, they can evaluate your specific needs and formulate a plan to get you back on track. Call 713-523-2134 for an appointment.

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