



ARTICLE

Keeping It Together: Summer Organizing Tips

Cape Cod Parent and Child

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Yay! You made it through the winter and your coats and winter gear are now neatly tucked away for the season, right? Now you've pulled out all the light-weight summer jackets, the beach towels, the flip-flops and beach bags, right? Excellent! Now where will it all go? There are probably lots of visitors coming and going all summer long, and there are inevitably lots of items to keep track of.

As you approach this new season here are a few pointers to keep in mind:

-The use of "zones" is very important, no matter what area you are organizing. It's a way to categorize sections of your home so that order is in groups which are then broken down into manageable containers. This allows for a logical system that your kids and guests can follow.

-Using labels to mark containers where possible will be helpful to everyone. A simple label-maker is a great way to create a system that lasts.

-Hooks placed along the wall are a great place to hang damp towels. In the winter, this area can be used for hanging coats and outerwear.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Most of the messy closets I have seen in my 12 years of organizing for a living are caused by the same basic problems: people don't put things away properly when they are in a hurry and they tend to collect lots of unused items.

Most people only wear 20% of the clothes in their closets, so the very first thing you want to get a handle on when organizing your entry closet is the "sorting" process. Hold up each jacket and ask yourself "Do I actually wear this?" and ask the same question for your kids' clothes. "Do I love it? Does it love me? Is it flattering? Is it in good condition and still in style?" These are all key questions to ask yourself.

It helps to get a friend involved in this process with you. A friend will keep you motivated and focused and keep you from getting distracted when you find that old box of photos under the shoes and tossed sweaters.

READY TO HANG OUT

Once you figure out what you're keeping, put the piles into categories that you can hang together. Blazers and light jackets should hang together as should windbreakers and rain gear. A good way to sort and hang each member of the family's jackets separately is to use your label-maker and print a long label with each person's name on it and attach that to the top of a hanger as a place holder.

Most of us have a mismatched assortment of hangers-plastic, and wire cheapies from the dry cleaners or sturdy wooden ones. When lined up together, the different sizes and styles actually encourage a mess because all your clothes sit differently on the hangers. If you can afford it, buy matching hangers – it will make all the difference in the world. The uniformity makes your closet look more organized instantly.

Since this season is all about shorter jackets and cover-ups, you want to maximize your floor space and leave room for shoe shelves below. Ideally, you want to look for flat shelves, which come in 2 shelf tall styles on which you can place two units on top of each other and add more side by side as needed. This is the best way to store flip flops, sandals and even athletic shoes. Horizontal metal racks are OK too; just make sure to avoid the kind where the shoes fit over a bended metal wire. Those tend to be very cumbersome and hard to place and remove shoes. Also, they don't allow you to maximize the height under the jackets.

The space between the top shelf and ceiling is often wasted. You can maximize the height in the closet by adding a shelf or shelf dividers on the existing shelf so items such as baseball caps and beach hats can be piled up and won't topple over. You can also use a couple of clear drawers stacked on top of each other. I love these because they make it easy to identify what's inside. The plastic drawers are also great in the winter months for storing mittens, hats and gloves. Very important: remember to measure your space very carefully before you go out and buy any containers! You will avoid extensive returns.

The closet door is excellent for added storage. Use pocket bags for suntan lotions, storing extra flip flops and any other small items, and you can hang your beach bags on the outside of the closet door by applying hooks to the back of the door.

Laminated checklists are great to help family members remember those last-minute items they need to take with them as they walk out the door, i.e. keys, wallet, backpack, lunch, and briefcase.

Special Tips

- For a mudroom, you can turn a back entry or a side or garage entry way into an efficient mudroom with the right accessories: a peg rack on the wall is perfect for backpacks to dog leashes and it's kid accessible when installed 28 inches from the floor. Keep umbrellas, baseball bats or other sporting gear out from underfoot by using an extra-large container to keep all items vertical.
- For the summer months, place a large container on the back porch or put by the pool. Make sure it's big enough to hold all your children's outdoor toys and insist on a daily clean up time.
- Fill a cooler with ice, drinks, snacks and wipes so the kids don't need to go in and out of the house as much.
- Set up an outdoor supply box filled with hats, caps, sunscreen, sunglasses, extra flip flops, towels, bug repellent and a small first aid kit. Keep it near the door.
- Make sure to set aside at least 5-10 minutes at the end of the day for clean-up.

THE SAND IN YOUR SHOES

Keep sand outside the house by placing a small tub of water by the door for rinsing feet before you go inside. Keep a towel handy to dry off and keep a plastic tray by the door as you walk in the house from the beach for all flip flops and beach shoes.

Enjoy the sunny weather and the much anticipated days outdoors! The lazy days of summer don't have to become the messy days of summer. A few basic tools and containers are all you need to keep everyone in sync with your warm weather system.

Happy organizing and happy summer!

Nicole Gabai is the president and founder of B. Organized!, a company specializing in working with busy moms to create innovative solutions for the home and office. She has owned the company for 12 years and was previously based in New York City. She is now based in Falmouth and can be reached at nicole@b-organized.net or 508.532.2715. In addition to working closely with her clients, Nicole also presents workshops and seminars on how to get organized and simplify your life. Her work is widely recognized along the East Coast, from Maine to Miami and internationally in Peru and Mexico.