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Here's this month's edition with organizing and redesign ideas.



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A Summer to Declutter

While cleaning might normally be associated with Spring, Summer is a great time (if you have more time) to do some decluttering and organizing. The weather is cooperative to be in and out of the house. A clutter-free, organized home is easier to clean, and enables you to find things in less than minute. Being organized actually allows you to be lazy since you don't have to think as much once things are set-up and in their place. It is easier to focus when your mind and environment aren't cluttered up. If you are a busy parent, you have even more reason to be organized.



Here are some basic but good-to-keep-in-mind organizing tips:

- Have a place for everything, and only one place to minimize looking for something in multiple locations (p.s. no junk drawers!).
- Put like objects together, near where they are used.
- Use dual-purpose items, such as furniture that doubles as storage and decor.

- To determine if something can be discarded, ask yourself: Do you really like it? Will you realistically use it again? Do you own another better one? Is it old, ugly, not working, out of style, out of date, or inefficient? If you throw it out and need another, can you easily get another? Has it been a year since you've used it?

- Go through toys periodically and get rid of ones that kids have grown out of. For little toys and pieces, use clear labeled boxes with lids. Give duplicates or extras to relatives for them to have when kids visit, or donate.
- Don't buy containers before knowing what you're keeping — choosing the bins or baskets is almost the last step of the process.

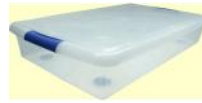
- If you have items of importance, they should be displayed or stored with respect, not stuffed away.
- For donations or stuff to bring to someone else, place a labeled box or plastic container near the door so you are more inclined to see and grab with you when you leave.
- Don't take responsibility for anybody's clutter except your own. If you're hanging onto someone else's extra stuff, give it back. Let them deal with it.

Last but not least, have the beach stuff all in one place so you're ready to hit the sand at a moment's notice. A bag with towels, sunscreen, toys for kids, etc. just needs refreshments and a good beach read. Enjoy the summer weather!



Storing Bed Linens

In general, I suggest keeping bed linens for a bed *with that particular bed*, i.e. under it in a rolling under-the-bed bin or very close by. This helps to avoid mix-up. I use linen closet space to hold towels and bins of bathroom-related health & beauty aids as well as extra supplies.



Click to enlarge

I also kept it simple with the kids' twin sheet sets -- plain white; white makes laundry easy/ interchangeable and bleaching keeps them clean. Sorry, no My Little Pony or Star Wars sheets, kids!

One tip I've heard (which I've tried) is to take an entire matching set of one size and put it into one of the set's pillow-cases. That is



an option you can try -- I found it great to grab n' go once assembled but since I had a bunch of individual items as well as sets, I ended up having random extras. I also read a suggestion from a woman who assembled sets with a ribbon, which seemed a bit too Martha-Stewart-ish to me.

A Few Tips from Real Simple:

- Store batteries in the same direction; if positive and negative ends touch, it can shorten the life of the batteries
- Temperature does not

affect the performance of lightbulbs, so you can store bulbs in the garage or the attic



- To preserve paint for later use, clean around the lip of the can then cover with plastic wrap before replacing the lid – this prevents rust from seeping in to the paint and makes the lid easier to pry off
- When summer ends, put (dry) lawn furniture cushions into large plastic boxes that you've poked holes in to prevent mildew

FOOD FOR THOUGHT...

Sometimes just because it is there, doesn't mean you have to use it. I'm talking about shelving, space, closets or drawers that may be inaccessible, difficult to reach, or unneeded for storage.

I know it's hard to imagine, but, yes, you can leave things empty or unused. Whenever I mention this to clients, they get a very scared look on their faces. Their eyes get all big and they look at me like I'm a 3-headed alien. Don't feel like you have to use space that you have UNLESS you need it and the space works for you.

