

Taming the Closet Demon

Contributed by Anita Dobin

Consider this scenario - you open the door to your closet:

- and you're buried under an avalanche of shoes, boxes, bags and sweaters
- you can't squeeze in one more thing
- only to realize you have nothing to wear because you can no longer see your clothes
- the floor is no longer visible
- you can't even open the door

Sound all too familiar. Don't despair; even the smallest closet can be made to look like a designer closet if you follow a few simple (o.k. maybe not so simple) steps. So let's begin - have heavy duty trash bags ready. Work in small increments. Start from the bottom and work your way up. Pick up everything on the floor and remove it from the closet. Create four piles to help decide whether to keep, toss, make a charitable donation or give away. This is the hard part - all your other piles should be larger than your "to keep" pile. To determine what to keep ask yourself the following (be honest) before it goes back into the closet: - Do I/Will I still wear this item? - Is it outdated/damaged/too small? Don't be afraid of making a mistake. Try to set sentiment aside, unless the item is a one-of-a-kind or can absolutely not be replaced - let it go. After you have tackled the floor area move on to the rods, then finally the shelves using the same four pile system. Aesthetics are just as important as space. If the closet looks appealing you will be more likely to keep up the maintenance. Uniformity makes all the difference. Remember Joan Crawford's admonition, "no wire hangers, ever". She was on to something. Remove all wire hangers and replace with one or two of the same style and color hangers. If you share a closet, color code the hangers, using a different color for each person sharing the space. Maybe use all wood for suits, shirts, sweaters and clip style for skirts and pants - just keep it consistent. Purchase some attractive boxes or plastic bins to store out of season sweaters, pocketbooks or shoes. Use the back of the door to hang a shoe tree. This can be used for shoes or for small accessories such as scarves, gloves or belts. If the closet is high enough, add another rod. This immediately doubles your space and is great for short hanging like suits, skirts or jackets. If you have the luxury of more than one closet, assign one just for outer wear (heavy jackets, boots, rain coats, etc.) A seasonal review of your wardrobe keeps you on the neatness track. Remove all out-of-season clothes and take inventory. Store whatever you intend to holdover in clear plastic bins or take to the dry cleaners. Many dry cleaners will clean your clothes and provide free storage for several months. This serves the dual purpose of getting your clothes out of the closet and allows you to reevaluate your wardrobe. Chances are you won't want to pay for dry cleaning a garment you don't intend to wear again. Guilt and sentiment are two emotions that may hamper your purging efforts. Recycling your garments by donating them to the less fortunate should make you feel good (and the tax deduction should make you feel even more virtuous). If your practical side won't let you throw anything away, consider selling it on E-bay or if it's in really good condition a consignment store may be the way to go. Consider having a closet purging party with your friends. Everyone gets together with their purged clothes and exchanges the items with each other. You never know what treasures are lurking in your friends' closets. Designer closets and new clothes it's a win, win. And what about the closet demon? Tamed! Organizing consultant Anita Dobin, with Super Organizing Solutions, thinks everyone can have a more functional, efficient closet. When less is more, you achieve more with less.