



Maintaining the Home

Discovering the Secrets of Successful Storage

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“Where do I put it all?”
“If I put it away, I never can find it again.”
“If I can’t see it, I won’t use it.”

Do these storage problems sound similar to your own? Take action and save time by organizing your storage now. Begin by planning for better use of existing space by s-t-r-e-t-c-h-i-n-g your storage. Keeping things where you can find them at a moment’s notice saves time and energy, making life a little easier.

Start your storage plans by considering:

- Space you have available
- Items to be stored
- Resources available to you – including money to purchase storage accessories; skills you have to make items; and the time required to organize, plan and build

The following are some basic clues to successful storage:

Sort items carefully. Many of us store leftovers we throw away the next time we clean the refrigerator. This also applies to storage. We keep many items only to give or throw them away later. These items take up valuable space while we are waiting to take action.

Store articles at point of use. Since many activities – sewing, hobbies, meal preparation – require much getting out and putting away, they can be

carried out more smoothly if needed materials and equipment are stored close to the activity.

Rearrange the space to fit the article to be stored. Don’t let tradition trick you into thinking the space *must* be used for specific items. Store similar items by stacking or placing one behind the other. Store unlike items either in one row or in one layer.

Plan for flexibility of storage space. Use adjustable shelving, sliding trays or movable storage accessories. Plan for changing interests and new purchases.

Tips for Successful Storage

The following are practical suggestions for making the most of your storage space, old or new. They can also help you save wear and tear on tempers and supplies.

1. *Get rid* of items you don’t use or need anymore. This will give you space for more important things.

Give away items that have not been used for a year to someone who can use them.

Throw away if things are not usable.

Sell Away items that are of good quality but no longer needed. They may be sold at thrift shops or secondhand stores.

2. Put seldom used or out-of-season articles in boxes or bags in your less-accessible storage areas. This will provide more convenient space

for the things you use every day. You may have been using as much as 24 cubic feet of space under your bed for storing dust and lost socks. Make that lost space work for you by building containers out of cardboard boxes.

3. Save steps by storing articles near where they will be used. Mending time is often lost searching for thread. A pegboard, or board with nails, divided by colors can save the frustration of rummaging through boxes of spools.
4. Place items within easy reach. The more accessible items are, the more apt you are to put them back. Toys and tools should be accessible and easy to put back because of their frequent use. If you have no shelves, an inexpensive alternative is to use bolt boards or particle boards stacked with bricks or large juice cans (covered with adhesive paper) between them. When the shelves are in place, purchase some plastic dishpans and label them with various categories of supplies, toys, materials or equipment. These dishpans, kept on homemade shelves, will keep articles within easy reach.
5. Group together articles of a similar nature. You can lose several hours sifting through large coffee cans of mixed nails and screws. A simple solution is to store heavy objects in tin cans with contents clearly labeled. Glass jars have the advantage of immediate content visibility. To save space, affix the lids of screw-top jars to the underside of a shelf with two screws.
6. Place things so you can easily see them to avoid a frantic search. Many people lose their keys at some point. Using a key board can help avoid this. Cut a board in the shape of a key and add cup hooks on which to hang keys. Or, add hooks to a bulletin board or mini tack board.
7. Arrange articles so you can remove them without disturbing other things. This way you can avoid missing, crushing or knocking things over.
8. Build to fit your storage needs but keep your storage flexible. For example, use adjustable shelves. Increase storage space in a closet by adding a lower hanging rod. Cut an old broom handle the length you would like the rod to be, suspend it with two lengths of rope looped around the existing rod and tie it to the ends of the lower rod.
9. Design drawers, shelves and trays to fit the sizes and shapes of articles you will be storing. Make heavy, corrugated cardboard dividers to fit any size drawer and make sections to fit the stored items. Use cardboard tubes from bathroom tissue to store electrical cords. Coil the cord, push it into the tube and store it in a drawer.
10. Protect your belongings from dust, sun, dampness, insects, rats and mice. Plan for any special conditions needed for storage, such as refrigeration or protection from moisture. Sealed plastic bags will guard clean woolen clothing from moths and dust. Infrequently used silver will not tarnish as rapidly if wrapped in specially treated cloths or in self-sealing plastic.

The basic secrets for successful storage are planning, organizing and action, but the best plans are worthless if no action is taken.

This material was adapted from publications produced by New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension. Extension materials can be found on the Web at www.cahe.nmsu.edu/pubs.

*This resource is one in a series on **Maintaining the Home** which include:*

Interior Maintenance

Preventive Home Maintenance Checkup
Make a Basic Toolkit for Simple Home Repairs
Selection and Use of Home Cleaning Products
Discovering the Secrets of Successful Storage

Heating

Furnace Care
Fireplace and Chimney Care

Cooling

Evaporative Cooler
Air Conditioner
Ceiling Fans

Plumbing

Fixing Plugged Sink Drains
How to Unclog a Toilet
Repairing Dripping Faucets

Electrical

How to Set or Reset a Circuit Breaker
How to Replace a Fuse

Appliances

How to Buy an Energy Efficient Home Appliance
Choosing a Water Heater

Maintenance:

Dishwasher Care and Dishwasher Cleaning
Dryer Care and Dryer Cleaning
Freezer Care and Freezer Cleaning
Garbage Disposal Care and Cleaning
Range and Oven Care and Range Cleaning
Refrigerator Care and Refrigerator Cleaning
Small Electrical Appliance Care and Cleaning
Washer Care and Cleaning

Flooring

Buying new carpet
Carpet Care and Cleaning
Wood Floors Care and Cleaning
Ceramic Tile Floors Care and Cleaning
Vinyl Floor Coverings Care and Cleaning

Walls

Selecting and Applying Paint
Wallpaper Selection and Cleaning
Repairing Walls

Furniture

Furnishing Your New Home: Color and Design
Selecting Fabric For Home Furnishings

Exterior Maintenance

Home Exterior

Foundations, Basements and Yards
Exterior Walls, Windows, and Doors

Roof

A Guide To Roofs
Roof Maintenance

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Principles of Xeriscape
Watering Your Lawn

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Child-Proofing Your Home
Is Your Home Safe From Fire Hazards?
Smoke Alarms Save Lives
Carbon Monoxide Alarms
Are Your Children Safe From Poisons?
Protecting Yourself Against Burglary

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Conservation

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Easy Tips to Save Money and the Planet
How to Stop Air Leaks Around Windows
Energy-Efficient Heating and Cooling
Indoor Water Conservation Tips
Outdoor Water Conservation Tips

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Reduce-Reuse-Recycle: Alternatives for Waste Management
Create a home recycling center
Healthy Indoor Air for New Mexico Homes
Dealing with Mold
Household Hazardous Waste
Hazardous Household Substances: Alternatives That Are Relatively Free of Toxic Effects
Radon

Pest Control

Cockroaches and Their Control
Southwest Insects

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Update your home for a lifetime of living
Vision Loss & Hearing Loss
Hand Dexterity, Strength and Range of Motion
Cognitive Difficulties
Mobility Impairments, Balance and Coordination

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