

HOW TO GET ORGANIZED AND ENJOY A SMALL LIVING SPACE

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WE OFTEN COMPLAIN THAT WE NEVER HAVE ENOUGH SPACE.

Every inch of space counts when the floor area is limited. With a little ingenuity, some practical solutions and yes, maybe selling or trading in a few items, your small dwelling can become your home. Enough of feeling cramped and cluttered! Now is the time of year to finally get organized and make the most of every inch of space with these helpful room-by-room ideas. But before you start organizing, you have to start editing.



Editing

Clean out your belongings before you think about organizing. Don't do it the other way around. You can only really accurately know what space you have when you've culled the clutter. If you don't really take a hard look at what you're stuffing in your spaces, you'll waste time and money organizing stuff you don't need in the first place.

Organized spaces are simple to use. They have enough room for the items there. It makes sense. Every item in your home has a location. Organized spaces also feel calm, open and welcoming.

Living room

The living room is generally a communal gathering place for family and friends, and the hub of the home's activities. Get organized by doing the following:

- » Get a coffee table that has a bottom shelf and store items like magazines, books and children's toys in baskets.
- » Buy furniture with built-in, hidden storage compartments, such a lift-up seat tops on ottomans.
- » Hang lightweight brackets and use shelves on the wall to store DVDs, CDs, books, picture frames and even small stereo systems.
- » Mount your flat-panel television above a fireplace or on the largest wall.
- » Purchase furniture that offers hidden built-in storage compartments.
- » Buy small furniture. Trade in overstuffed chairs and couches for sleek, minimalist designs.
- » A rolling cart with various-sized baskets is a great solution for items that may move from room to room. For example, keep art supplies, sewing materials, organized financial paperwork, and daily mail on this rack. It easily rolls from the living room to the kitchen table and hides away in a bedroom when company visits.

Kitchen

The kitchen is the heart of the home, where all those wonderful goodies are baked and served. It takes a little more creativity but a small kitchen is not a lost cause. Utilize all the space you can find for storage and preparation areas:

- » Hang pots and pans on the wall or from the ceiling.
- » Purchase cabinet organizers that allow for double stacking of dishes and canned goods in the cabinets.
- » Get rid of appliances that are rarely used or are not multi-purpose.
- » Get a dining table that has collapsible leaves, allowing it to shrink down when the family is not using it.
- » Use a small kitchen island on wheels for more storage and for an extra food preparation area.
- » If you renovate your kitchen use the vertical space and install extra-tall cabinets.
- » Keep your kitchen clean. Accessorize with a mirror and a small lamp on the countertop for visual impact.



Bathroom

- » Make the most of a small shower in the bathroom by using a basket that hangs over the showerhead for storing shampoo, body wash and washcloths.
- » Increase the sink space by getting a small shelf that sits on the back of the counter, going over the faucet, and make sure your vanity has underneath closed-up storage.
- » Use a small stainless steel cart to display fragrance bottles and extra bath towels.
- » If you renovate create wall niches in the shower and/or tub area.

Bedrooms

- Organizing small spaces in regards to closets is often difficult for anyone but with a good closet-organizing system you will be amazed on how much you can store in a standard double closet that has been organized. Switch out seasonal clothing, storing it in vacuum-sealed bags below the bed. Use ways to organize clothing that maximize space, such as hanging shoe racks, stackable drawers and hanging cubbies for T-shirts and socks.
- » Consider bunk beds for children or even loft beds that allow room for a desk underneath.
 - » Purchase bedroom furniture that has drawer storage built into the bed.
 - » Headboards can be purchased with shelves and lights built in.
 - » Use risers to lift the bed off the floor high enough to store plastic bins underneath.

Closets

Closets are probably the smallest part of your condo and organizing them is often difficult, but with a good closet-organizing system and patience, you will be amazed at how much you can store in a standard double closet that has been organized. Try:

- » Hanging shoe racks
- » Vacuum seal bags for off season clothes
- » Hanging cubbies for socks and small items

If I may add...

- » Don't expect to get organized overnight unless you're really fast at it, or it's a small area.
- » Once you get organized, you may go back to your old habits. Just keep pushing yourself and you'll eventually get organized for life!
- » Quiet time – give yourself the time and space to be able to organize your thoughts and your environment.
- » Discipline – getting organized might feel like a struggle, or it might just require getting into a new routine habit of keeping things in their place.

Living in a small space doesn't mean giving up everything. It is a simple matter of downsizing and using creative ideas to make things fit into new spaces. Less clutter also means less dusting, so there is a plus side.

Be sure to de-clutter regularly. Ask yourself: Do I need this? Will I need this in a year? Have I used this in the last year? Do I really love it? Is there someone else who could use this more? Do I have more than I could reasonably use in foreseeable future? Will I miss this if I don't have it?



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is the principal designer of the Toronto Interior Design Group. Specializing in residential and commercial projects, Simard often applies his signature high/low and old/new combination design techniques in developing unique designs. Simard has created designs for clients in Toronto, Montreal and Miami, and has appeared as a regular guest expert on Citytv's *CityLine*. For more information visit tidg.ca.