

# FALL

# HOME IMPROVEMENT

A Norwich and Sidney Pennysavers Publication • Issue #3 • November 14, 2023

## Issue Three

- 8 steps to a more functional kitchen
- The benefits of working with an interior designer
- Design ideas that can create a peaceful feel





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# Kitchen cabinets: reface or replace?

The kitchen is a busy room in many homes. That popularity likely has something to do with why so many homeowners spend sizable sums renovating their kitchens. According to highlights from the 2022 U.S. Houzz

Homeowners have different options when it comes to cabinet renovations, and they may need to decide if they need to replace or reface their cabinets.

Kitchen Trends Study, the median spend on major kitchen remodels grew by 14 percent from the previous year, and minor remodels increased by 25 percent. Spurred on by increased time spent at home during the pandemic, the main impetus for kitchen remodels according to the study was that homeowners wanted to make these improvements all along and finally had the time and means to do so.

There are many aspects of a kitchen that homeowners can change. Houzz found 94 percent of renovators either fully or partially replaced cabinets in their improvement plans. Cabinets are a major component of kitchen

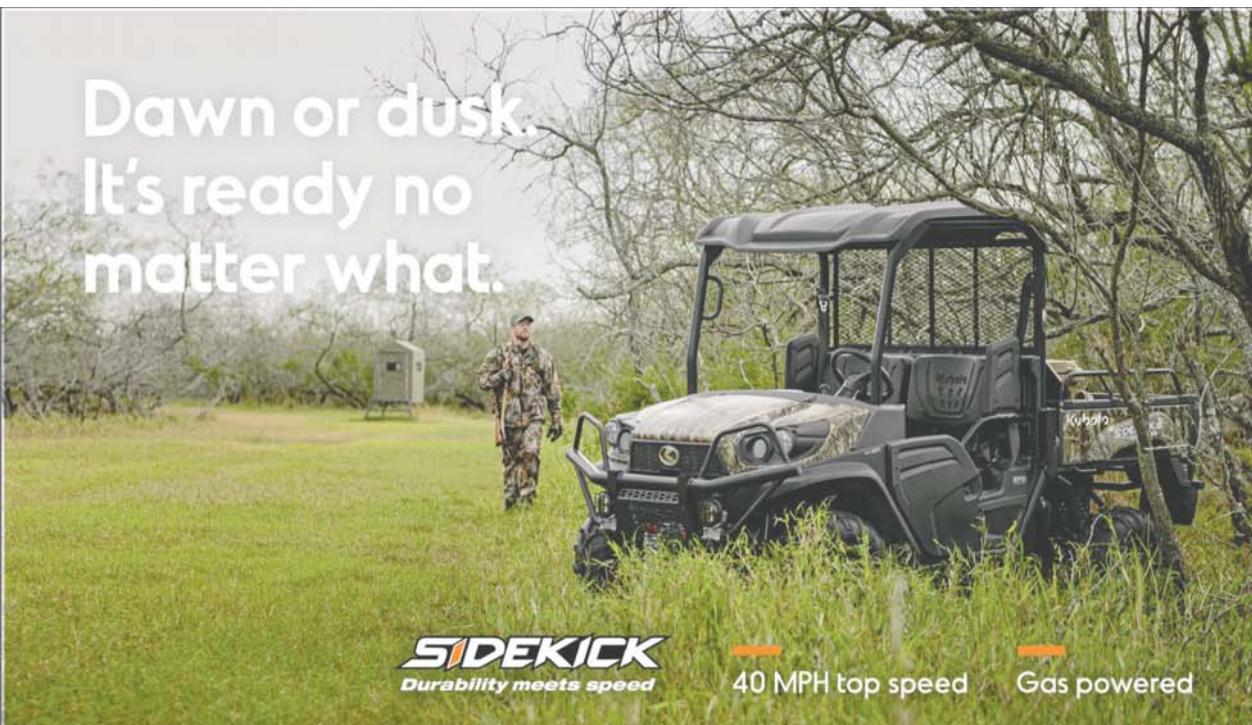
layouts. Cabinets help to establish the aesthetic of a kitchen and serve a useful function, providing necessary storage space to ensure the room does not appear cluttered.

Homeowners have different options when it comes to cabinet renovations, and they may need to decide if they need to replace or reface their cabinets.

## Replacement

Cabinet replacement involves removing all of the existing cabinets before new cabinets are leveled and installed. According to the home improvement

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resource The Spruce, homeowners can expect to pay between \$13,000 and \$30,000 for contractor grade cabinets. Cabinet replacement is a good idea when homeowners want to add more cabinet space or create a new layout in the room.

**Refacing**

Cabinet refacing is less messy and less disruptive than replacement. All cabinets remain the same size and in the same location. The cabinet boxes must be in good shape to facilitate a refacing. The process involves installation of new drawer fronts and cabinet doors, as well as veneering of the cabinet boxes. New hardware typically is installed as well. The insides of the cabinets typically remain the same. The Spruce says cabinet refacing can be 30 to 50 percent cheaper than a replacement.

Most people call in professionals to change their cabinets. Cabinet replacement can be a do-it-yourself job, but it involves measuring and ensuring everything fits and is leveled appropriately. Homeowners who choose to reface their cabinets themselves may opt to paint or restain. Wood veneer or a new door and drawer panel installation can be complicated and is best left to qualified contractors. FH238160

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# Design ideas that can create a peaceful feel

Homes are often characterized as sanctuaries for their residents. A calm place to come home to after a busy day at work or school is often just what people need to unwind.

Certain design components can help individuals turn their homes into relaxing respites from the daily grind. With that goal in mind, individuals can consider these ideas to create a peaceful feel inside their homes.

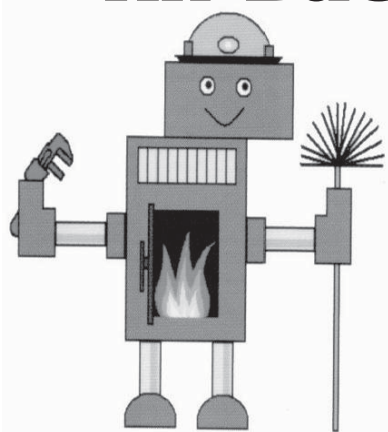
• **Paint with neutral colors.**

Wall colors can define the mood in a given room, and neutral colors have long been linked to a calming effect. Subtle shades like beige, taupe and light gray are known to create a relaxed vibe in a room, so these colors can be a go-to choice. Some people consider neutral colors a tad boring, so individuals concerned by that impression can limit neutral colors to rooms designated as sanctuaries, like a reading room, a spa bathroom or a bedroom.

• **Employ natural light.**

Natural light also can help to establish a serene setting at home. Large windows that let daylight in can improve anyone's mood. A 2022 study from researchers at the University of Chile in Santiago found that the more natural light that entered a home, the happier people said they felt. Study authors even noted that the largest uptick in well-being was found among participants who lived in homes in which windows covered at least 40 percent of the dwelling's wall space. Opening blinds or curtains and, if possible, installing

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larger windows in a home can help to establish the relaxing, happy vibe individuals are aiming for.

**• Utilize plants to set a peaceful tone.**

The United Kingdom-based Royal Horticultural Society notes that research has found that indoor plants can benefit psychological well-being. The RHS notes that improved mood and reduced stress levels are two benefits that indoor plants can provide. A good mood and less stress can help individuals establish the peaceful feel they're aiming for at home.

**• Keep devices out of bedrooms.**

Watching television while lying in bed, scanning a smartphone before turning off a nightstand light and retiring for the night, or reading an e-reader instead of a print book at night can transform a bedroom from a serene setting into one that's overrun with stimuli. According to the Sleep Foundation, technology stimulates the mind, which can make it harder to fall asleep. In addition, blue light emitted by devices disrupts the natural production of melatonin, a hormone that makes it easier to fall asleep. That can negate any efforts individuals have undertaken to make their bedrooms as peaceful as possible. Designate bedrooms in the house as technology-free zones to ensure the peaceful vibe continues uninterrupted until everyone goes to bed.

A peaceful home makes for the perfect respite at the end of a busy day. Various design choices can help individuals establish a serene vibe throughout their homes. HI23B442

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# Owner's suite renovation ideas for luxury spaces

An owner's suite is a sanctuary for homeowners. It's a place where adults can retreat, relax and unwind after a busy day. It's expected that a bed and some other furniture will take up residence in a standard bedroom, but certain elements can help homeowners create stunning spaces. While the largest bedroom in the home typically is dubbed the "owner's suite," it cannot be classified as a suite unless there is an adjoining bathroom. An owner's suite also may have many more unique features that individuals may want to incorporate into a remodel. Here are some ideas to consider.

### Upgraded closet

Those who will be overhauling the walls and layout of the bedroom can configure the space to make room for a serious closet overhaul. A spacious, walk-in closet that has built-in shelves, drawers and rods can improve the functionality of the bedroom. Draw dividers and other components also can optimize space.

### Sitting area

In large suites, homeowners may have the potential to set up a sitting area in one portion of the room away from the bed. This area can have a sofa, chairs, chaise, or other furniture and make for an ideal spot to read and lounge. Some people also enjoy having a television adjacent to the sitting area so they can watch a show in the privacy of the bedroom.

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**Fireplace**

Fireplaces add a unique ambiance to bedrooms and make for cozy spaces in which to cuddle up. While a traditional, roaring wood fire is one option, there is much less mess and fuss with a gas fireplace. Some gas fireplaces may not even have to be vented, and they can be turned on with the flip of a switch.

**Private patio or balcony**

Owners who want to go the extra mile in owner's suite renovations can incorporate outdoor spaces into the plans. Many homes are now being built with owner's suites on the first floor, facilitating the possibility of aging in place at home. With this layout, the bedroom can be opened up to the outdoors by way of a sliding door or French doors. Decking or a patio can be outside of the room, or even a covered space similar to a Florida room. Those with second-floor suites may want to consider a small deck or balcony where bistro seating can be placed.

**Luxury bath**

Owners can turn the en suite bathroom into something out of a spa. A steam shower; heated floors; separate area for the toilet, closed off from the rest of the bathroom; and dual vanities and sinks can make this a place that screams luxury and comfort. Do not forget dimmer switches for lighting, and even the inclusion of some new aromatherapy technology for increasing the potential for relaxation.

Many different features can improve the functionality and luxury of an owner's suite. HI23B435



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# The benefits of working with an interior designer

Homes require an investment of time, energy and money. The payoff of those investments is substantial, and the benefits of home ownership are more profound than even longtime homeowners may recognize.

A 2016 report from the National Association of Realtors indicated that home ownership boosts kids' performance in the classroom, leads to greater participation in civic and volunteer activities and improves health care outcomes, among other benefits. With so much to gain from home ownership, it's no wonder so many people across the globe are willing to commit the time, energy and financial resources necessary to own their own homes.

Homes are undoubtedly a point of pride for millions of homeowners, and that sense of fulfillment is even greater when interiors are up-to-date and welcoming. Home trends come and go, and busy homeowners can be forgiven if they're not able to keep up with the latest interior design styles. That's the job of a skilled interior designer. Working with such professionals when redoing a home's interior can make all the difference and increase the already profound sense of pride many homeowners have in their homes.

- Interior designers can help narrow down the possibilities. A simple internet search prior to beginning a home renovation project will turn up millions of results. That can leave homeowners' heads spinning as they try to identify their own style and plan a project that coordinates with their preferences. Experienced interior designers can help homeowners identify their style and offer practical insight as they work with clients to choose elements to incorporate into spaces they aspire to renovate.

- Interior designers can ensure a room doesn't stick out like a sore thumb. Just because a design looks good on the internet does not mean it will work well in every home, particularly if only one room is being renovated. Interior



designers recognize that and can steer homeowners in the direction of designs that will fit the larger theme of the home while still offering a fresh look and feel.

- Interior designers can save homeowners money and headaches. Renovation projects can be pricey, and that price tag only goes up when mistakes are made. Interior designers advise clients on furnishings and other design components, and that advice can save homeowners money in the long run. Furnishings may be returnable, but such returns typically come with sizable fees. By directing clients toward furnishings and other components that fit the overall design scheme, interior designers are saving homeowners the cost and headaches associated with fixable yet expensive mistakes.
- Interior designs are up-to-date on the latest trends. Real estate and design trends come and go, and dated designs can adversely affect what homeowners recoup at resale. Homeowners who want to update their home interiors with the ultimate goal of selling their homes can work with experienced interior designers who know which trends are in and which are out. That knowledge can make it easier and more lucrative to sell a home.

Homes are a significant investment, and investing in the services of an experienced interior designer can ensure homeowners maximize the value of their homes. HI23B444



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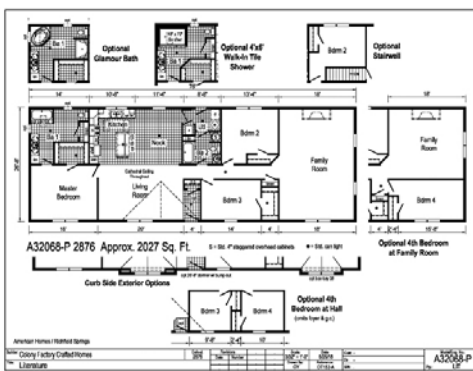
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# 8 steps to a more functional kitchen

A kitchen is often the most utilized room in a house. Meals may be prepared, cooked and often eaten in kitchens, and the room is often utilized as a homework spot or a makeshift place to pay bills and stay on top of household needs. By enhancing the organization and functionality of the kitchen, homeowners can enjoy these popular spaces even more.

Homeowners have increased their spending on home improvements in recent years. According to the Joint Center for Housing Studies for Harvard University, project spending rose to \$472 billion in 2022 from \$328 billion in 2019. It's estimated consumers will have spent \$485 billion by the end of 2023. Kitchen renovations were the most popular upgrade and accounted for the highest budgets in 2021, according to Houzz. When the time comes to renovate a kitchen, homeowners can take steps to make these spaces more organized and therefore functional. Here are eight tips to creating a more functional kitchen.

1. Increase storage, and then invest in more. Make the most of corner cabinets and other potential dead spots in a kitchen. Various products can be used to organize awkwardly angled or shaped areas. Kitchen designers also can work with you to reconfigure cabinets and kitchen layouts.
2. Organize utensils and dishes around the sink/dishwasher. Rather than traversing the kitchen to put clean dishes away, make loading and unloading the dishwasher that much easier by locating commonly used items next to and above it. Similarly, place frequently used saucepans, baking dishes and other items near the oven or food preparation area.



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3. Utilize drawer and cabinet organizers. Make a place for everything in the kitchen. Take out all items and see what you need and use all the time. Then coordinate storage around those items so everything fits perfectly. Pull-out shelves and Lazy Susans also can facilitate access.
  4. Add shelves to cabinets. If you can afford to have a custom-built kitchen, by all means design cabinets according to preference. If you're using standard cabinets, you may have to reconfigure shelves and spacing to fit the items you have. This also will help you maximize cabinet space.
  5. Organize the garbage. Have a pull-out drawer or cabinet to store trash bins. Separate compost, trash and recycling needs.
  6. Create continuity in the room. Many open concept homes will have kitchens open up to another room in the home. Mirror the design scheme from elsewhere in the house, and make sure that the flow between spaces is not obstructed.
  7. Create a beverage station. A beverage station can minimize the time needed to make a cup of tea or coffee or for the kids to grab juice or chocolate milk.
  8. Have a workspace in the kitchen. Whether paying bills, making a grocery list or leaving notes for the family, a dedicated workspace can add more function to the room. Be sure there is task lighting nearby and ample overhead lighting to ensure that all kitchen needs are illuminated properly. A more functional kitchen can make this already popular space even more so.
- HI23B447



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# The benefits of energy-efficient homes

Consumer efforts to be more eco-conscious are more and more noticeable. For proof of that, one need look no further than the increase in vehicle charging stations. Such stations are more accessible than ever and illustrate that consumer preference is increasingly leaning toward products that leave as small a carbon footprint as possible. Another indicator of a growing interest in eco-friendly products is the popularity in energy-

efficient homes. In fact, a recent survey from the National Association of Home Builders found that energy-efficient features are among the most sought-after “must-haves” among homebuyers. Among those surveyed, 83 percent desired Energy Star-rated windows, 81 percent wanted Energy Star-rated appliances and 80 percent preferred energy-efficient lighting. Though eco-conscious sensibilities compel



millions of homeowners to make their homes more energy-efficient, that’s not the only reason to upgrade your home. The following are a handful of the many benefits of energy-efficient homes.

- **Save money:** Inflation was one of the biggest stories of 2022, as the cost of living rose dramatically in the wake of world events. According to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, inflation led to an overall 6.5 percent increase in prices. But that increase was dwarfed by the cost of electricity, which increased by 14.3 percent in 2022. Energy-efficient appliances can help homeowners overcome that spike, as the U.S. Department of Energy indicates upgrading to such products can help homeowners reduce their energy costs by as much as 30 percent.
- **Improve resale value:** As the NAHB survey indicates, modern homebuyers want energy-efficient homes. They’re also willing to pay more for such homes. Research from the mortgage lender Freddie Mac found that homes with energy-efficient ratings sold for nearly 3 percent more on average than homes without such ratings.
- **Live healthier:** The benefits of energy-efficient homes aren’t just economic, though health-related benefits certainly produce an economic incentive as well. According to the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, insulation and air sealing protect individuals from heat waves and other ripple effects of climate change. The ACEEE notes that weatherization can improve indoor air quality and comfort, a notable benefit for asthma sufferers and seniors. In fact, the ACEEE estimates that integrating energy efficiency programs in homes could reduce seniors’ risk for falls in their homes, potentially saving \$2 billion in fall-related health care costs over the next decade, and improve asthma outcomes, which could reduce health care costs by as much as half a billion dollars. Energy-efficient products and practices pay numerous dividends, making them a worthy expenditure for any homeowners looking to upgrade their homes. TF235945

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# Garage storage solutions

Who doesn't have a space at home that serves as a catch-all for items that seemingly have no other home? For many, this storage wasteland where items go to be forgotten tends to be the garage. Before long, clutter can overwhelm the space and create an eyesore. Garage clutter also makes the space less functional by making it harder to park a vehicle or store equipment. Organizing a garage takes work, but the end result can improve the appearance, free up space, make work more efficient, and make it easier to find and use tools more readily. Here are some ways to get started on organizing your garage.

## Start with cleaning and culling

One of the first steps when organizing a garage is to thoroughly analyze what is needed and what can be removed from the garage. If items belong elsewhere, such as in a shed or the basement, move these items first. Discard damaged or broken items. Next, move on to tools or gear that hasn't been used in some time. Will you use it again? If the item has been collecting dust for years, you likely already know the answer to that question. Pile all items in the driveway so you have a clean slate with which to start. Measure the room to figure out the dimensions so you'll know how much wall space is available for storage.

## Free up floor space

The ultimate goal of a garage storage renovation is to make floor space available, according to Stacey Schweiger of Sunshine Organizing. Lifting items off the floor makes access easier, and protects items should there be a flood or leaks. A combination of wall shelves, overhead shelves, cabinets, and wall hooks can help homeowners create more floor area. Organization becomes easier when everything has a designated space where it can be easily returned to.



## Consider weight

When investing in shelving and racks, remember that many of the items stored in garages tend to be heavy. It's important to ensure that shelves and hooks are heavy-duty and able to withstand the weight of pressure put on them. Verify the maximum weight so that racks will not buckle or tip over and cause issues.

## Utilize overhead space

Overhead storage can be reserved for items that aren't used frequently, such as seasonal decorations or luggage.

## Out of sight

Some items should be stored out of sight and beyond the reach of children and pets. Cabinets and containers can be used and locked to secure materials, such as fertilizers, paints, solvents, and other chemicals.

## Additional ideas

Magnets, pegboards, organization bins and systems, and similar products can be used to corral small or errant items like hand tools, fasteners and more. Garage organization will take some planning and time, but the end result can be well worth the effort. TF23C524

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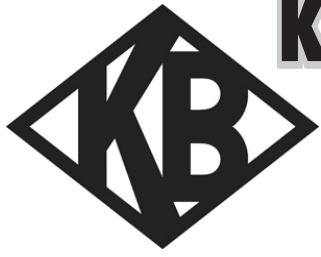
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## Comfort And Energy Efficiency In The Room Over The Garage Are Easily Achieved With Spray Foam Insulation.

Icynene (www.icynene.com), guides home improvers to immediate energy savings -- and comfort -- with these rewarding insulation upgrades:

**Attics:** If your energy costs are "through the roof," consider insulating your attic with a two-in-one spray foam insulation and air barrier.

Insulating and air-sealing the attic floor is likely your best option for increasing energy efficiency and getting the best return on your insulation investment.

To improve home performance and comfort without having to spend money all at once, some Icynene contractors recommend insulating with Icynene in steps, but homeowners will notice results from the very first installation. And the very first recommendation the contractor usually makes is to insulate the attic floor because the energy savings can be considerable.

**Additions and/or rooms over garage/porch:** Bonus rooms offer desirable additional space, but they are often uncomfortable -- either too hot or too cold. In summer temperatures, an extra cooling zone can be required just



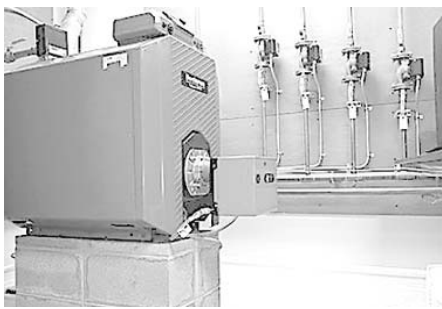
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to cool the space and remove the humidity. In cold weather, it is common to find floors that are 10\* cooler than the room.

The cause -- Air is leaking through the floor to or from the unconditioned garage below. Unfortunately, the conventional way of insulating the garage ceiling is often inadequate. It is almost impossible to install conventional insulation so that it stays in contact with the floor above. The other challenge is installing it accurately around bracing and bridging between joists. Air gaps usually exist between the floor and the insulation, compromising its R-value and performance.

The cure -- Making the bonus room a comfortable space can be easily achieved using spray foam insulation. Spray foam adheres to the construction material for a continuous air-seal and complete protective barrier. A product like Icynene fills and seals all gaps to minimize air leakage, potential condensation problems, and air quality issues. Homeowners can get comfortable in this room without cranking the A/C this summer.

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# Autumn Marks A Great Time To Clear Away Clutter

Clutter is a concern for many homeowners. Clutter can gradually accumulate, and over time a home can turn from a welcoming respite to a claustrophobic place overwhelmed by items of little or no value.

Homeowners who have battled clutter in the past often find that it is most likely to accumulate over the winter, when frigid temperatures outside drive more people indoors. Spending more time indoors means more trash indoors.

Newspapers and magazines might be easy to discard when the weather is warm, but a trip outside to discard such items takes less precedence when it must be made in below freezing temperatures.

The likelihood that even the cleanliest of homeowners might accumulate some clutter over the winter only highlights the importance of clearing a house of clutter in the fall. While clearing clutter can seem like an arduous task, the following tips can make the project much easier.

- Clean one room or area at a time. A disorganized approach to getting organized is likely to waste time and may even prove fruitless. Work your way through your home or apartment one room at a time rather than jumping from room to room. Have boxes or crates designated for items you find that belong in other rooms, and place items in the appropriate boxes as you clean rather than returning items to the right room as you find them. Once you have finished a room, move on to the next one and try to finish a room on the same day you started.

- Invest in a paper shredder. Old bills, bank statements, receipts, and other once-important papers have a way of accumulating on desks, in drawers and on counters. Such documents often do not need to be held onto, but men and women are hesitant to discard them because they contain personal information. A paper shredder is a great investment for homeowners and apartment dwellers alike and can be the safest way to discard documents with potentially sensitive information. It's also a friend to anyone attempting to clear clutter. Many shredders can shred multiple pages at a time, making them a quick and safe way to discard documents that have been littering a home long after they were useful.

- Decide to donate some items. Many unused items lying around your house can

likely be donated to a worthy cause, which can help motivate you to clean out your closet of all those extra sweaters and other items you no longer wear. Encourage fellow members of the household to donate as well, and set aside a few boxes for clothes that will be donated and those that will be discarded. Donated items need not be clothes, as many goodwill organizations accept appliances and other products as well.

- Put seasonal items away. Storing seasonal items like patio furniture and swimsuits can help

reduce the likelihood that clutter will build up in the months ahead. Pack items from your summer wardrobe together and store them in a suitcase in the back of your closet. This frees up room for your fall and winter

clothing and helps you avoid overstuffed drawers. In addition to clothing, store seasonal furniture neatly in the back of your garage or storage shed, pulling out items like snow shovels or snow blowers you may need come the winter.

- Tackle the hall closet. Hall closets are convenient dropoff spots for items of all shapes, uses and sizes, as the hall closet is not necessarily opened each day and therefore men and women can simply ignore it as it gradually accumulates more and more random items. But hall closets can be valuable storage spaces when used appropriately. Designate a significant amount of time to tackle hallway closets in your home so you can thoroughly reduce the clutter within them and get back to using the closets as the valuable, organized storage units they're intended to be. Discuss having different purposes for each closet, such as one devoted to cleaning items, another to coats, and so on. Resolve to keep the floors in each closet clear of items, as clutter tends to be on the floor and then work its way upward, eventually encompassing the entire closet. Once the hallway closets have been cleared, work hard to keep them clean as autumn turns into winter.



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