



UNIVERSITY OF
FLORIDA

FCS3127

EXTENSION

Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Using Space Wisely¹

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Storage space is an important part of planning a new home, or remodeling or reorganizing an existing home. Analyzing your current storage situation can offer ideas for more effective home storage. Ask yourself these questions.

- 1) Does your space seem to be “closing in on you?”
- 2) Do you get frustrated and angry when trying to find things you want?
- 3) Do articles fall out of closets when you open the door?
- 4) Are scattered articles around your house or yard creating a safety hazard?
- 5) Do household members avoid putting items away saying there is no place to put them?
- 6) Do you park your car outside because the garage is full of stuff?
- 7) Do your children need to learn to be more organized?

If the answer is “yes” to any of these questions, you should analyze your existing space and look for strategies to manage it better.

STORAGE PRINCIPLES

The following suggestions for the versatile use of storage space may simplify your planning.

- Store items in areas where they are most commonly used.
- Store items together that you use together, including those you use often.
- Store frequently used items at the most convenient height, usually according to the height of the person using them, and according to the weight and size of the item. For example, children are more likely to hang up their clothes if they can reach the clothes rod.
- Store items where they are easy to see, reach and replace. Allow for air to circulate in the area.
- Store items where they will not be damaged and where they will not be a safety risk to the user.
- Keep your storage system flexible to adjust to changing needs.
- Use multi-purpose items, such as a hassock that converts into a bed.

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1. This document is FCS 3127, one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: April 2000. First published: May 1989. Revised: April 2000. Please visit the EDIS Website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>
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- Plan your “vertical space” as carefully as you do your horizontal space. Use wall space, closet and cabinet interiors and even the backs of doors with space saving items.
- Plan storage for interior spaces that is not only functional, but also decorative.
- Use all available space — do not waste it. Plan storage size and depth to fit needs for each area, based on the size and shape of the items to be stored. (See *Table 1*)

STRATEGIES THAT MAKE THE BEST USE OF SPACE

Structural Changes

Home remodeling now exceeds new home building and many families fix up instead of trading up. Homeowners elect to remain in their homes: equipping closets more efficiently; modernizing kitchens and baths; adding porches and greenhouses; converting carports and garages; removing or changing walls; and adding safety features for older persons.

Table 1: Common Depths Required for Storage

Items to be stored	4"	8"	12"	16"	20"	24"
Bathroom supplies, equip.				■		
Bed, folding						■
Bedding					■	■
Beverages, food in cases			■	■		
Books		■	■			
Business papers			■	■		
Christmas decorations			■	■		
Cleaning supplies	■	■				
Clothing in drawers					■	■
Clothing on hangers					■	■
Clothing on hooks				■	■	
Dinnerware			■	■		
Drawer files				■		
Electric fans			■			
Glassware	■					
Infants' equipment						■
Luggage						■
Magazines		■	■			
Radios			■			
Sewing equipment						■
Toilet supplies	■	■				
Tools (most hand-held)	■					
Trays, platters, bowls				■		
Utensils				■		

Analyze your needs and your total space. Try to think in terms of cubic footage, not just square footage available to you. You may want to consider making minor structural changes by removing walls, doors, adding skylights, creating usable attic or loft space, redesigning awkward closets or a pantry, or upgrading the storage capacity of a utility or laundry room. (See *Figure 1*.) Windows can be removed and converted to wall storage space, or double-hung doors may be replaced with more windows or French doors. Wall space between studs may be hollowed out and used for shallow shelves or inset cabinet space.

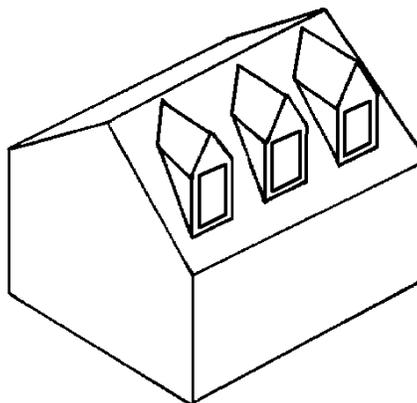


Figure 1. Create an attic storage space.

Removing walls in your home and reallocating space is popular. For example, converting two small bedrooms into one large room with a dressing room and luxury bath, may be a solution to your space dilemma when children move away and the smaller bedrooms no longer serve their original purpose. Often you can make better use of your available space simply by reorganizing.

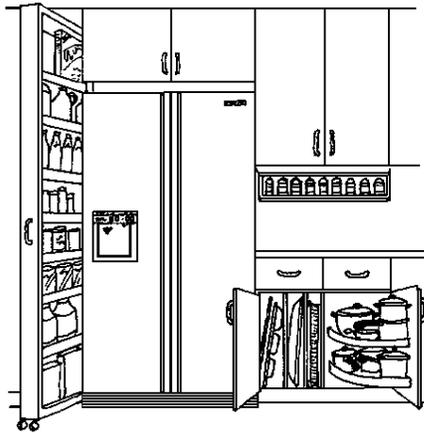


Figure 2. Well-planned storage utilizes all available space. Note the pull-out cabinet storage unit which is ideal for storing canned goods, other kitchen items.

Creating Unique Storage

Many pieces of furniture or cabinetry are specifically designed to serve as storage — a chest of drawers, dresser, some headboards, desk, armoire, cedar chest, china cabinet, credenza, bookcase, large basket or trunk.

Consider space-efficient furniture that can be built-in, stacked, knocked down, folded, deflated or rolled up. Also, consider mobile furniture, carts and storage pieces having parts that move, pull out, or fold down (for example, a slant top desk, a mobile work and serving cart, a breakfront that opens up for serving food, tables

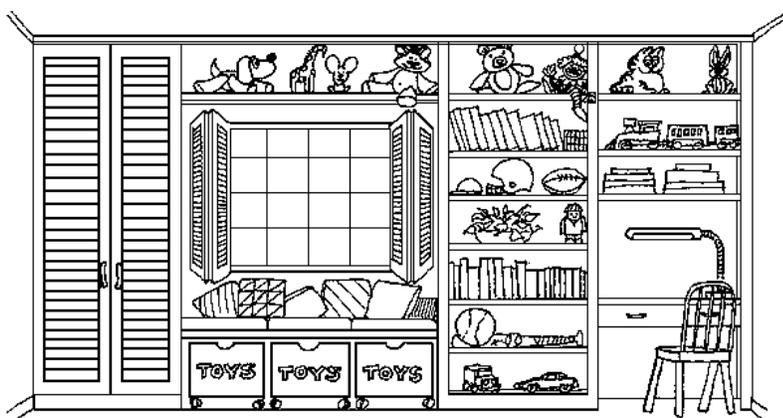


Figure 3. An entire wall is carefully designed to accommodate the needs of a young child. As the child grows the space can be adapted with minor changes to new uses.

that not only open up, but also raise and lower from dining level to coffee table height). Consider some storage pieces that can be moved from place to place — a light fixture that can be clamped onto any protruding surface like a bookshelf, or slipped into brackets on the wall. Often safety factors and efficiency make furniture on wheels or casters desirable, such as a cutting block, a television or even a piano. This is especially desirable for the handicapped and the elderly.

Select tables, desks, and chests with many drawers and shelves, if possible, instead of open bottom furniture with long legs and one thin drawer. Choose a chair with an ironing board on the back, a bed with drawers or with a trundle beneath it. An inflatable air mattress requires very little space to store and can provide a comfortable bed for guests.

Built-Ins

Built-ins include bookshelves, closets, cabinets, and chests, seating, and beds (platform or bunk). Popular built-in furniture looks trim, saves space, and, if included in a new or remodeled home, saves the cost of furniture. Built-in furniture should be designed to complement the area. The style should blend with other furniture and the colors and trim should be similar to the wall. Recessing the bottom of built-in furniture a few inches above the floor makes it seem to float, creating the illusion of more floor space. Every nook and cranny can be put to work. (See *Figure 2*) Ordinary furniture sometimes can be converted into built-ins by sawing off parts such as legs, adding false fronts such as a molding to fill in a gap in space (for example, between two bookcases), painting furniture the same color as the wall or using the same wall covering.

Built-ins often provide customized storage for specific items. (See *Figure 3*) A window seat with drawers, chest or container storage beneath it, can serve as a reading nook, offer extra sleeping space, and supply storage space for hobbies, bedding, out-of-season clothes, shoes and boots, or even as a visitor's chest of drawers.

A similar built-in for the kitchen can provide bench seating around a table, with storage space beneath for bulky or seasonal items, such as a turkey roaster, punch bowl or picnic basket.

Storage and Organizer Units

An endless selection of inventive gadgetry makes it possible to utilize every inch of space to suit your lifestyle (See *Figure 4*) Products to improve closet storage efficiency include wire basket systems, clip-on baskets, shelf dividers, corrugated boxes and chests, vinyl bags of assorted types, plastic stacking drawers, stow-away bins and chest of drawers, and a myriad of boxes, containers, and baskets; available to solve almost any space dilemma. Also, custom designed and do-it-yourself storage systems can help solve your unique needs. Various components can help reorganize kitchen and bath cabinetry, pantries, utility/laundry rooms, closets, garages and carports.

A variety of hooks and racks can be used to store tools, exercise equipment and even household accessories. Decorative storage chests are available in fiberboard, plastic and inexpensive but sturdy cardboard. They are designed to fit under a bed, on the closet floor or upper shelves, beneath a desk or on brackets on the wall. Colorful modules or cubes and ventilated bins add storage space and cheerfulness to a room. These products are available in mass-market outlets such as drug stores, department stores, hardware stores, building supply stores and specialty shops. Specialized storage businesses have emerged which analyze storage areas and then design units that maximize available space.

Commercial products are available in a wide price range. By grouping items or using them creatively, they can become a decorative aspect of the home. For example, several kitchen towel racks can be arranged attractively on a wall and used to display unusual fabrics or gift wrappings. Well-designed storage space can be functional as well as look smart and decorative.

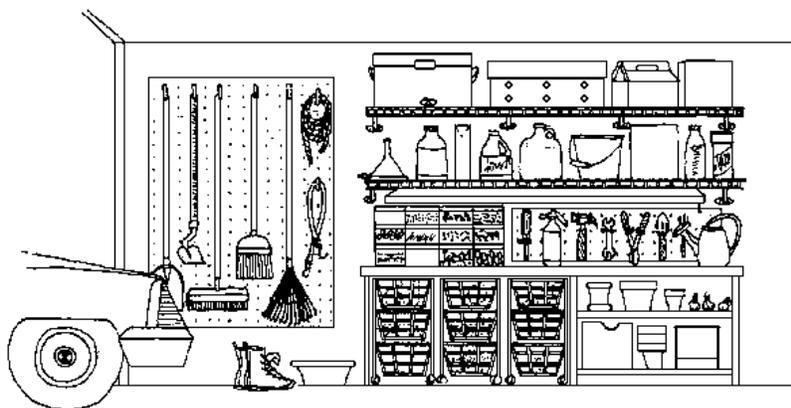


Figure 4. Commercial storage components can be designed into customized storage systems that accommodate every need.

Recycle/Reuse Materials to Save Money

Temporarily or for children, you may want to use make-do's rather than costly items. (See *Figure 5*)

- A large garbage can may be covered with a round

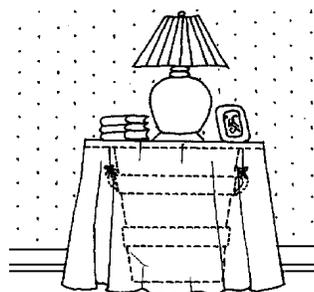


Figure 5. Good storage ideas abound for little investments of time and money.

plywood top, draped with a round skirt and pronto — storage for a variety of household items.

- Ladders or step stools topped with shelves or a flush door table top provide storage space, display area, desk or work surface.
- Use flat-top trunks for end tables, coffee table, make-up table, linen storage; cover the top with foam and slipcover or upholster it and use for seating.

- Adding legs and cushions to a door or other flat board makes a bench, bed or sofa. Casters may also be used in place of legs. Without the cushions, you have a movable plant stand to display collections, books or records.
- Bricks (stone, concrete or glass) and boards can be used for bookshelves, shoe shelves, end tables, coffee tables and plant stands.
- Use five-sided cubes for a number of things. A basic 15-inch cube made of plywood can be a coffee table, an end table, a storage unit, a cushioned seat or almost anything you like, and in any color because it is easy to paint or enamel. Brightly painted cubes lined up along the floor of a child's room will hold books and toys. Stack them up in your family room to hold books, small TV, stereo equipment, and decorative objects. Stacked units can be used for a two-faced room divider with open sides facing either way.
- Storage containers can be made from boxes, tin cans, baskets or other recycled containers. These can be painted, covered with self-adhesive paper, wallpaper, fabric. Sturdy old tables, chests or storage units can look attractive through refinishing, painting, application of self-adhesive paper or upholstering with easily-cared-for fabric.
- New or used filing cabinets may be used in a variety of ways to provide an abundance of storage. Cover them with fabric, wallpaper or a coat of paint to make them more attractive.
- Acquire translucent furniture — an acrylic or glass top dining table or coffee table, or a glass block room divider.
- Purchase down-sized furniture or use two small sofas instead of one large sofa. Armless sofas and chairs are less bulky and thus, visually expand space.
- Keep wall and furniture colors light and all in the same color family. Use bright accents and texture to add emphasis.
- Use wallpaper with small patterns.
- In the bedrooms and other areas that use large pieces of furniture, repeat the same fabric on all of the major pieces. Or consider using space-smart sleeping/storage units that fold up during waking hours, especially in a child's room where play space is necessary.
- Paint wood trim the same color as the walls.
- Careful arrangement of lighting will help eliminate shadows and avoid the dark corners which make a room seem smaller. (Small lights nestled under plants help to open up space.)
- Group small wall accessories and use a few well-designed accessories to avoid a cluttered look. Store unused accessories and rotate them for decorating variety.
- Use mirrors to give an illusion of depth and expand the light in the room.
- Use easy-to-obtain items in unusual ways to serve as storage. Painted baskets serve as storage for items that are not used on a regular basis. Storage can be designed to be decorative as well as functional. (See *Figure 6*)

Opening Existing Space

Once you have identified your storage needs, you can plan your vertical and horizontal space to create illusions that open space visually.

Here are some simple ways to stretch space visually:

- Keep window treatment simple. Mini-blinds of the same color as the room, shades, shutters or simple fabric window treatments visually consume a limited amount of space.

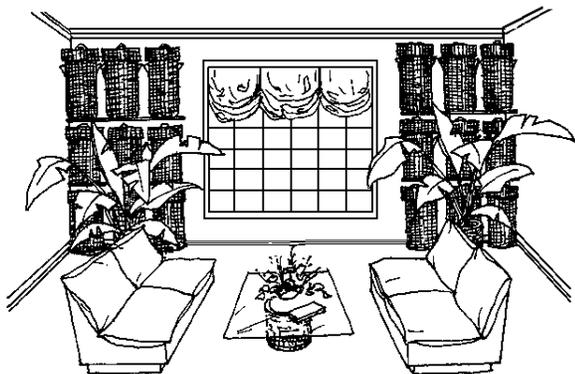


Figure 6. Use items in creative ways to provide more storage.

- Arrange furniture for a smooth traffic flow and to avoid damage by other furniture or doors. Start by arranging furniture in corners of the room and around the sides of a room, or cluster them in a tight conversational grouping in the center of the room.
- Include storage strategies as part of your decorating theme.

Space is costly! By planning your space strategically, you can minimize maintenance, provide more options for space use, have safer surroundings, and reduce frustration and stress.

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