

Orderly Lives

By Viviane Kertesz

1. Clothing: Keep, toss, repair, or look again.

To make closet and dresser space for him, Jaclyn Ray, a professional organizer with Toronto's Happy Trails Organizing, suggests asking yourself "What would happen if I didn't have this item?" If the answer is "Nothing", recycle it without regrets. She suggests sorting all your togs into four piles: keep, toss, repair or look again. Invite a friend over for a fashion show to tell you what those items in pile four really look like. Then make your decision accordingly.

2. Use it or lose it, and when in doubt, throw it out.

"The idea of organizing", Ray says, "is not solely to rearrange the objects in one space in a better manner; start by getting rid of as much stuff as you can first, then organizing what's left." Deciding what to keep and what to toss is tough, but key to space sharing. Ditch anything broken, missing pieces, or magazines more than three years old. With the exception of collector's items, if you are storing books or CDs you haven't touched in two years, trade them in for some playtime money.

3. Ditch the doubles: what's yours is mine.

Don't keep two of anything-period. If you have duplicates of a given item, keep whichever of the two is newer or better looking. When it comes to the kitchen, you'll find you have multiples of any given item: corkscrews, can openers, etc. Decide which of you has the best blender and give the other one to a friend, charity, or sell it at a garage sale.

4. Everything has a place: installing extra storage space.

Do you have clutter on the floor of each room and clothing or other junk lying in piles on top of chairs? "Any sense of design or interior decorating is lost if your house is completely disorganized," Ray says. To make the best use of any room, get as much stuff off the floor as possible. In a long hallway, foyer, or entranceway, put a row of hooks at eye level. Above those hooks, add a row of shelves above head level, placing on the shelf attractive baskets which can hold accessories, purses, scarves, and hats. This eliminates mounds of items piled sky-high on a chair while freeing up floor space. Your apartment will look bigger and brighter, be easier and quicker to clean, and best of all, you will be able to easily locate all your stuff.

