

Shelf help for the organizationally challenged. Genius!

BEFORE



Where's my favorite pink sweater? What happened to the pants that match this jacket? These are the questions that Lisa Steinberg often found herself asking out loud as she hurried to get dressed. No, she hadn't lent the missing items to a friend. They were simply buried in her closet.

"At work, I've always been very organized," says Lisa—who, ironically, has made her living as a fashion-accessories merchandiser in New York. The problem with her closet was partly a question of time. On a typical day, she'd arrive home after 7 P.M., eager to get dinner going and relax, which meant that her dry cleaning was hung—plastic bags and all—on her closet door or, worse, on the door of her bedroom.

To help Lisa clean up her act, we called in Jen M.R. Doman, who runs an organization company called Get It Together! "Lisa had things all over the bedroom, even though her closet is a pretty decent size," Jen says. She and Lisa began by emptying out the closet to assess its basic assets: upper and lower rods, two shelves, and cubbies running down one side.

After Jen's makeover (turn the page to see the results), skirts and pants went on the lower rod, blouses and jackets above. Shoes, once piled willy-nilly, found a home in clear plastic drawers. Now Lisa no longer needs to go on a search-and-rescue mission each morning. And she's not the only one who's happy. By weeding out clothes she rarely wore, Lisa was able to donate three overflowing bags to deserving causes. —Keith Mulvihill

Jen Says...

DO A WEAR TEST Empty your closet, and go through the contents item by item. Ask yourself if you really need to keep an outfit you love but haven't worn in a year—or that you hope to fit into again someday.

DON'T HANG TOUGH Take dry-cleaned garments out of the plastic as soon as you get them home, so the fabric can breathe. Also, remove clothes from flimsy wire hangers, which can leave them misshapen.

AVOID THE MUNCHIES Never store wool sweaters in cardboard boxes, which offer no protection against hungry moths. Clear plastic or canvas containers with tight lids are best. If your space is limited, enlist an empty suitcase.

GIVE AND TAKE When you buy a new skirt, donate an old one to charity. If you add without subtracting, you'll just end up with the same old mess.

AFTER

It hurt just a little. But Jen, right, helped Lisa to dispose of enough surplus suits, pants, shirts, belts, handbags, sweaters, scarves, and shoes that the rest of her clothes could fit neatly into the newly navigable closet.



If you can't weed out your closet alone, enlist a friend who's good at tough love.

- 1 **BIN THERE** On the top shelf, canvas bins let Lisa store at least two dozen bags upright; \$32 each from Hold Everything.
- 2 **DIVIDE AND CONQUER** Never leave knitwear on hangers. Instead, keep sweaters folded on shelves, using clip-on dividers to prevent the stacks from toppling; \$7 for a set of two at Bed Bath & Beyond.
- 3 **THINK THIN** Thirty-five slim, nonslip aluminum hangers for shirts and jackets (all arranged by color and style) fit on the top rod; a package of three hangers is \$9 from the Container Store.
- 4 **DON'T BE A BASKET CASE** Wire drawers allow air to circulate and let Lisa see what's at the bottom of the pile; components for a double-drawer system cost \$43 at Bed Bath & Beyond.
- 5 **GET ON A ROLL** Keep belts tidy by storing them coiled in an open, divided tray; \$13 at Bed Bath & Beyond.
- 6 **KEEP YOUR OPTIONS OPEN** These slender open hangers keep pants easily accessible, and clip-ons hold skirts neatly; \$7 for three pant hangers and \$8 for two skirt hangers, all at the Container Store.
- 7 **SEE IT ALL CLEARLY** Shoes are simple to find in these transparent plastic stacking boxes with drawers; \$7 and \$10 from the Container Store.