



# simplify your space

create order &  
reduce stress



**MARCIA RAMSLAND**

*Author of Simplify Your Life*

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create order & reduce stress

**MARCIA RAMSLAND**

The Organizing Pro



THOMAS NELSON  
*Since 1798*

NASHVILLE DALLAS MEXICO CITY RIO DE JANEIRO BEIJING

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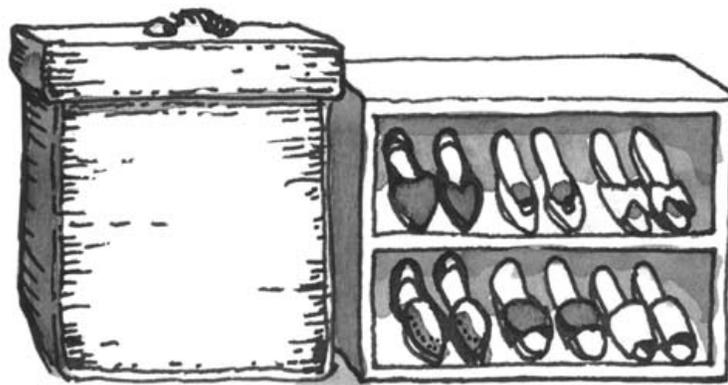
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# Simplify Your Personal Space

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Chapter 5—Bedroom  
Chapter 6—Bedroom Closet  
Chapter 7—Bathroom

Once you've covered the visible spaces of your house, it's time to give your personal space the time and attention it needs. In the midst of your busy life, you may be overlooking these three busy spaces: bedrooms, the closets, and the bathroom. The goal is to simplify these spaces so everyone can get an easy start in the morning and come home to order later in the day.



# Simplify Your Bedroom Closet

Perhaps in no other area are we more tempted to keep unused things than with clothes. Listen, let's quit dreaming. Give it to the Salvation Army. Let them find the perfect person.

—SANDRA FELTON

**M**a'am, I need to know how much hanging space you need before I can build your new closets," the project manager told my client.

Lindsay's family was living with three-foot-square closets in a turn-of-the-century historic home. She was desperate to find out how to maximize her closet space! But she didn't know how to answer the project manager's question.

"How would I know how much hanging space I need?" she asked.

"Oh, that's simple. Just count the hangers you have, allow an inch and a half per hanger, and then tell me how many feet of rod hanging space you need," he replied.

My client smiled and flicked her hand. "Of course I thought he was kidding, since I had no time to do that! But my engineer husband patiently counted the hangers and came back with the news.

"Honey, we've got a big problem," he said. "I don't know how to tell you this, but we need a quarter mile of hanging space!"

When Lindsay told me this story, we both laughed as we realized how vast that

closet would be. How had so much accumulated when she wasn't looking? Or had she reached the limit of what she could realistically live with and take care of?

I suspect that there is a bit of Lindsay in each of us—too many clothes, belts, or handbags, matched by too much jewelry and sportswear that is taking up needed space in our closets. Today is the day to simplify your bedroom closet! If you had to count every single item, how many items would you have to sort through to get dressed each day? Likely too many. Let's go through your closet and find out.

## Create a Plan

The goal for simplifying closet space is to organize and downscale so three things happen: getting dressed each morning is an easy part of your day, you walk out wearing a tasteful outfit, and you come back to an organized closet at the end of the day.

In this chapter, I will show you not only how to organize your closet but how to simplify it so you can get dressed easily. As you sort through the things in your closet, ask two key questions over each article of clothing: “Do I like this? Am I wearing it now (or in the near future)?” If the answer is “no” to either one, then out it goes!

I like one retailer's motto: “A closet full of clothes you can wear.” We usually have the first part—a full closet—but it's not full of things we can wear. There's a lot more in there that we need to weed out regularly, usually in the fall and spring, to pass on the excess we've accumulated.

Here's the order for our sorting:

1. Everything hanging
2. Everything on the floor
3. Everything on the shelves
4. Everything in drawers

If you need help making decisions, ask a friend who is decisive and dresses similarly and a bit better than you. The more organized it is the less time it should take. The more disorganized it is, the happier you will be when you see the finished result.

## Simplify Your Bedroom Closet

### Motivation:

- ❑ I can't find things I want in my closet.
- ❑ I have nothing to wear.
- ❑ I want to save time getting ready in the morning.

### Supplies:

- ❑ Three boxes for items to give away, dry clean, and fix
- ❑ Labels or label maker
- ❑ Matching hangers (all one style)

### Time Estimate:

4–8 hours per closet

### Reward:

An organized closet of ready-to-wear outfits

The problem with the closet often is too much stuff and disorganized space which makes Pareto's "20–80 Rule" true. Because we have too many clothes, we are often reaching for the favorite 20 percent of our clothes and searching through 80 percent that is taking up valuable space. Let's move the 80 percent unused items out and enjoy the organized space as well as benefiting other people.

## Approach It by Sections

Start organizing your closet by making your bed, so you have a flat surface to do any necessary sorting. Designate a bag or box for "giveaway" clothes, plus two others for "fix" and "dry clean."

### Hanging Clothes

Start at one end of the closet rod and sort the hanging clothes. Pull out each item and ask yourself these two questions: "Do I like this? Do I wear it now?" If the answer is no, place the item in your "giveaway" box. If the answer is yes, then rehang the

clothes by categories, such as long-sleeved tops, short-sleeved tops, slacks, and jackets. Step up your organization by arranging each section from dark colors to light colors, like a rainbow. Often you will find too many of the same color or style, so keep the best and let go of the rest.

Now finish the hanging items by using matching hangers and placing the front of the clothing items toward you. Hangers should hang one and a half inches apart. You should be able to see the front easily when you are looking for something to wear. Place your most used items closest to you.

If you have nice clothes but feel like you have nothing to wear, put together an outfit you like, including the jewelry, shoes, and purse. Take a picture and post it in your closet. Then on those days when you can't think of anything to wear, you can go to your tried-and-true photos to find a presentable (and sensational) outfit.

Store items elsewhere that you might still wear—another size, another season, or old favorites. This storage under the bed or in another closet should be less than a third of your current wardrobe, or you may be storing postponed decisions. Decide now to let go!



#### **SPACE-SAVING TIP #15**

Pull out all your empty hangers and develop the habit of putting them at one end of the closet. Space saved? Three inches for every dozen empty hangers.

## Closet Floor

Organize the closet floor by pulling everything out and organizing your shoes. This is where dust and clutter most accumulate, so I suggest you clean and vacuum the floor before going through your shoes.

Line up your shoes from dressy to casual and dark to light. Do you have room for all of them? If not, weed out the least worn or most scuffed-up shoes. Now you have new space! Make a note to get a shoe storage system that holds what you own.

- Get matching boxes for other storage items on your closet floor and label them for a clean and tidy look.
- Toss any plastic bags, as they tend to look unsightly and create floor clutter.
- Don't forget to include a clothes hamper in your closet or nearby.

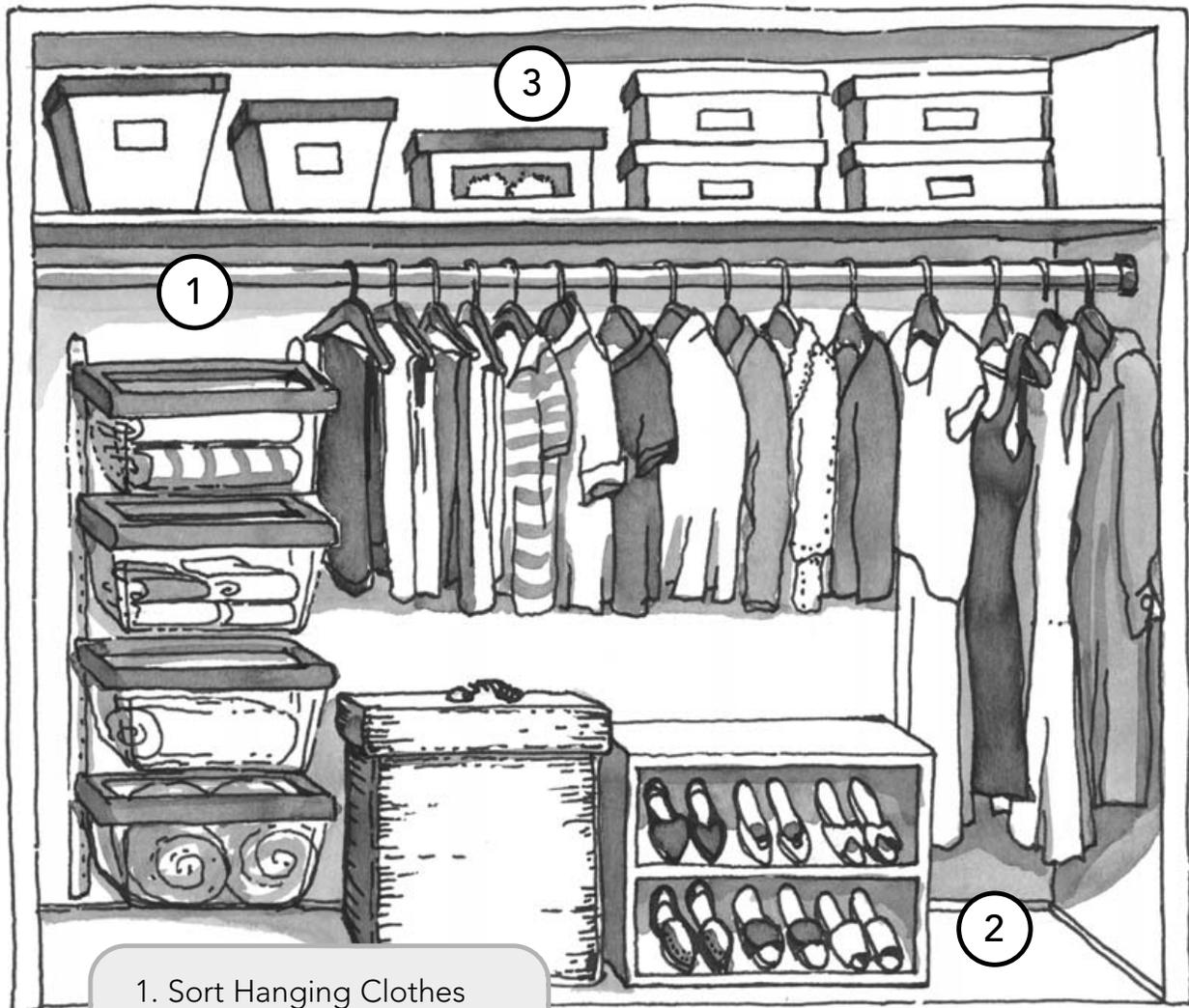
- Polish and clean your shoes. Box out-of-season shoes on your shelves with a label on the front. When you rotate them seasonally, turn the box around and put a label on the back of another seasonal pair of shoes.

Realtors say you can increase buyer appeal by keeping the floor of your closet relatively empty and clean. That's a good everyday practice too.



### SPACE-SAVING TIP #16

A variation on hanging clothes in blouse-slacks-jacket categories is to hang five of your favorite everyday outfits together, so it's easy to "grab and go."



1. Sort Hanging Clothes
2. Organize the Floor Items
3. Simplify the Shelves

## Mirror

A full-length mirror in or near your closet is your best tool for dressing nicely. Hang one on your closet door or prop one up in your bedroom. Check your appearance from head to toe for look your best for the day.

Trust your instincts to improve your clothes, shoes, and jewelry. And if it's a bad hair day, just smile extra big!

## Shelves

Take everything off your closet shelves and put back only what you like and use. Shelves often contain sweaters, purses, hats, shoeboxes, bags, and T shirts that were once daily regulars in your life. But over time these belongings turn into “stationary” clutter that doesn't know when to leave.

Now is the time to make those hard decisions and let some things go. Ask yourself, “Is this item part of my past or my future?” If it's sentimental, take a picture and let it go! This is your everyday closet. Save the memory in a picture, not on your shelf.

- Refold sweaters so the smooth, rounded edge I call “the decorative edge” is facing you. This provides a neat, clean look like fine retailers and makes each sweater easy to slide out.
- Hook shelf dividers on a shelf to keep one stack of clothes from falling over. Or space shoeboxes between stacks of clothes and purses to hold items in place.
- Use clear boxes to see what is neatly placed inside, or label closed boxes so you don't have to see the contents daily but you still know what's inside.



### **SPACE-SAVING TIP #17**

Invite a friend who dresses the way you like, but a bit better, to sort your closet with you. She and the mirror will give you the courage to let go of mismatched items and recycle the rest into your favorite style.

## Closet Drawers

Sort your closet or dresser drawers one at a time and use them efficiently for storing clothes and dressing items. Sort items by the size of the items, and then place them in that

size drawer. For instance, keep jewelry in jewelry trays in the narrowest drawers. Place socks and scarves in other narrow drawers. Stack T-shirts and sweaters neatly folded in deeper drawers. To see what is at the bottom of a deep drawer, stair-step the T-shirts or sweaters with one inch of the item under it showing so you can see all the items easily.

- Store underwear in one drawer with dividers to keep them from sliding around. Have enough for two weeks.
- Roll slippery nightgowns and lingerie so each rounded edge faces you and is easy to lift out. Use a box divider to keep it from piling up in a heap.
- Hang everything you can and fold less wrinkly items (sweaters, T shirts, and sportswear) in drawers.

## Jewelry Drawers

Put earrings in a hanging holder or small dividers like a plastic craft box or colored egg holder. Get a fabric tray or standing necklace holder to keep necklaces untangled. Keep only jewelry that you currently use. Store your treasures, and give away the rest. Organizing jewelry will save you lots of dressing time and make a good outfit great!



### **SPACE-SAVING TIP #18**

You can save twenty-five loads of laundry a year by getting enough underwear for two weeks and washing it every other week.

## Lighten Up and Let Go

We are trained to recycle lots of things. My plea is for you to actively rotate unused items out of your closet and into the hands of those who can use it.

After taking a trip to Haiti, I have personally been challenged to give away closet clutter. My feeling is you sometimes overlook your garage, knickknack, or book clutter, but people *need* your excess clothes. Recycle those unworn clothes today.

There are needy people in and around your city as well as around the world. So don't be guilty of hoarding unused items in closets and drawers. Give these items away, and people will be so happy to receive your excess treasures.

### Bedroom Closet Checklist

- 1. Are clothes hung by sections and outfits I like to wear?
- 2. Do all my hangars match?
- 3. Is my closet floor relatively empty and clutter free?
- 4. Are my shoes organized and ready to wear at a moment's notice?
- 5. Is there a full length mirror nearby I use daily?
- 6. Is the smooth "decorative edge" facing forward on all folded items?
- 7. Does each drawer have clothes and accessories organized by category?
- 8. Is my jewelry stored neatly in dividers and ready for me to dress quickly?
- 9. Do I regularly give clothes away to benefit others?
- 10. Is it easy to get dressed each day?

### *Tips from "The Decorating Coach," Susan Wells*

Say farewell to boring closets with a few decorative accents. Hooks that have been embellished with extra detail are versatile yet charming. Pewter finishes add a crisp contrast to walls painted in cool shades; bronze hooks will stand out against warm colors.

Put your shoeboxes to imaginative use by covering them in a series of mix-and-match textures. Lightly apply spray-on glue to the sides, attach fabric that has been cut to size, and then repeat for the covers. Fill with shoes and stuff, then stack and store your beautiful boxes.

For a finishing touch, indulge yourself in pretty hangers. A series of rich woods will lend an air of sophistication and continuity along the rod.

### Manage It Simply

Keep your closet and clothes in working order with a simple schedule. A penciled-in index card can be fine-tuned until you find a schedule that works for you. For example, a weekly clothes-maintenance schedule might look something like this:

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	Wash whites	Drop off dry cleaning	Wash darks	Pick up dry cleaning	Wash shirts and iron	Free or catchup day

A weekly routine will keep your clothes ready to wear anytime you need them. Every clothing item needs a home. A “stuffed” closet is a red flag that it’s time to sort and donate the excess.

- Kathryn’s girlfriends offered to come over one day and organize her closet with her. “Keep or go?” was the constant question to her as they went through one item at a time.

When they were finished, one friend said, “I’m taking these giveaway clothes bags home for a week. You can call me if you need something, and I will retrieve it.” Four days later Kathryn called when she needed a blouse for a suit. The friend returned the blouse—and that was the only item she retrieved.

Kathryn’s response? Gratitude that her friends helped her do what she couldn’t do on her own. And she was relieved to dress better as well.

- After my seminar, Mary Ann went home and gave away all the shoes in her closet that were painful to wear or no longer fit—twenty-two pairs of shoes went to a charity! The charity was quite happy, and Mary Ann was too, once she replaced them with shoes that were comfortable.
- Kim said when she gives away an outfit, she gives the jewelry with it too. “Why not?” she said. “I picked the most sensational pieces when I bought the outfit, so now someone else can also save the time shopping and look great right away.”

## Review: The CALM Bedroom Closet Approach

### Create a Plan

- ❶ Hanging items first
- ❷ Floor second
- ❸ Shelves and drawers third

### Approach It by Sections

- ❶ Set out a donations box to fill.
- ❷ Replace mismatched hangers with matching ones to inspire order.
- ❸ Use matching containers and label shoeboxes.

### Lighten Up and Let Go

- ❶ Donate extra clothes, shoes, and jewelry to a charity or give them to someone you know.
- ❷ Drop off items to be dry-cleaned or tailored.
- ❸ Take pictures of clothes you pass on if you feel the need to keep the memory.

### Manage It Simply

**Daily**—Straighten up before you leave each morning, and put your clothes on hangers and put away your shoes each evening.

**Weekly**—Keep filling your donation box with items you don't use.

**Seasonally**—Go through your clothes, shoes, and jewelry and get rid of those you no longer use or need.

Think of your closet as your most personal (and pleasant) space. Make a clean bedroom, an organized closet, and a tidy bathroom part of your routine to start your day and end your day right. You'll have a sense of serenity and well-being to face whatever happens each day.

*Whenever clients describe certain items as Good Stuff, I point out that just because stuff is good doesn't mean it's good for them.*

—HARRIET SCHECHTER