

Lessons from Small Spaces



Recently I listened to a talk entitled "**Less is More, Maximizing Small Residential Spaces,**" given by Sharon Lowenheim, a professional organizer in NYC and owner of Organizing Goddess, Inc. I figured that her city address gave her a leg-up on this topic! As the talk progressed, I realized that most of her wise advice for organizing small spaces had much general applicability.

Here are tips for organizing small spaces. They are also helpful general principles for any-sized space:

- **Use it or lose it.** As the often-quoted advice by William Morris goes: "Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful or think is beautiful."
- **One in - one out.** Be mindful of what you bring into the house, and let go of an item of the same category or size when you do.
- **Borrow instead of buy.** e.g. use the library (consider an online account there for reserving and renewing), borrow or rent equipment you use infrequently.
- **Examine your motivations for holding on to things.** Beware of: "*I may need it someday*" . . . "*I paid so much for this,*" . . . "*So-and-so will be unhappy if I give away their gift*" . . . "*I'll save this for the future grandchildren*" . . . "*I need to find the perfect place to donate this.*"
- **Limit the storage area allotted to a certain item,** as a way to monitor volume (e.g. one drawer for sweaters, one bin for magazines and "to-read" items).
- **Give away clothes you haven't worn in one year.** (OK, if you have the space, you can substitute 2 or 3 years, but there is wisdom to this general principle.)
- **Take care of and be honest with yourself about your collections.** Do you really still love these items? Are they things you have inherited and feel guilty about passing along? Are they really valuable? Can you pick the best ones and display them attractively? Are these things supporting my life goals, going forward?

Karen G. Kramer - Space to Breathe
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Here are a few tips that apply only to small areas - they may not be necessary for every space, but if they appeal to you . . . why not?!

1. **Use space under the bed for additional storage.** Select items you don't use that often (e.g. off-season clothing and bedding) and stuff that's clean and organized. If you need more space, get "bed risers."
2. **Think vertical.** There's lots of space that you can use going up the walls and even on ceiling (e.g. over-the-toilet storage, creatively placed hutches and shelving, racks to hang pots and pans in the kitchen).
3. **Closets:** Create a second level rod for hanging, use over-the-door shoe racks (good for many things in addition to shoes), add hooks wherever you can.
4. **Buy multipurpose furniture** such as ottomans with storage, coffee and side tables with drawers, beds with storage underneath, armoires that can be used as a desk and for storage.
5. **Go digital.** Scan everything you can (e.g. files, recipes), download music, use a Kindle.
6. **Keep it simple.** Have only what you need (e.g. two sets of sheets per bed). Buy quality when you can. Beware of buying in bulk.

I hope I have inspired you to de-clutter and simplify your small spaces, and all your spaces. Remember, less *really is* more so much of the time, and the best things in life. . . .are not things!