

Time to streamline that messy closet

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On a good day, you call it your closet. On most days, you call it a mess. Truth is, within that small space is enough stuff to fill a resale shop. Good stuff, bad stuff. Old Stuff and new. Some of it fabulous, a lot of it forgettable.

If you find yourself shuffling through tourist tee shirts, sentimentality, wrong sizes and wretched colors, it's time to clean. You can't dress effectively — or joyfully — if you have to tear through bulges just to make enough room to SEE whether you want to wear it.

With the change of seasons, then, it's a great time to change the way you get dressed. A couple of New York fashion experts believe that a streamlined closet is essential to good dressing.

Wayne Lukas, a fashion stylist for Revlon commercials and private clients such as Lauren Hutton, Christie Brinkley and Melanie Griffin, is also a closet-arranger who gets paid up to \$3,000 to spend a couple of days keeping wardrobes fabulous — and accessible.

A messy closet also reflects the uncertainty of not knowing what really works for you.

"It's not that everybody doesn't know what to wear, it's that everybody in the world is trying to please everybody else," Lukas says. "So when you walk into your closet, you're walking into the whole world. Forget pleasing the boss, the taxi driver, the friends, the husband, the man on the street."

The first rule for cleaning: Learn to please yourself.

"The No. 1 problem with American women's closets is too many clothes and not enough that are loved," says Amy Fino Collins, style editor at Harper's Bazaar, contributing editor at Vanity Fair and co-author with Olivia Goldsmith of "Simple Isn't Easy," (HarperCollins, \$5.50 paperback) published in September.

You love it, she says, "if it's that one piece of clothing you reach for all the time, not out of habit, but because it gives you a lift to wear it."

Lukas says to trust your instincts.

"People with phenomenal personal style — Lauren Bacall, Lauren Hutton — always look sort of the same. Lauren Hutton is my hero when it comes to sticking by your guns on what looks right for you, and you learn that from paying attention. When people say 'that looks wonderful on you,' put a check mark in your brain and buy another."

Collins refers to observations from others as "an objective confirmation."

Once you have listened to other people, Collins and Goldsmith say, listen to your heart. Try on everything you own and decide which pieces reflect YOUR look. Keep them.

Now comes the hard part, deciding what to do with the rest, such as:

—Clothes that still have price tags on them. If you haven't worn them by now

—Clothes that no longer fit. "When you hit Size 4 again (dream on)," they

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write, "you have our permission to go on a shopping spree."

—Clothes that basically are costumes, i.e., vintage and ceremonial clothing. Pack them away.

Anything that's really expensive may be wonderful, they say, but not if you haven't worn it. These "bargain beauties" probably were bought more for the labels than the way they look on you. Give 'em up.

Collins admits that they drive a hard bargain.

"We're trying to act in the role of a best friend, giving good common sense advice," she says. "The goal is to get women feeling good about themselves so they can carry on with the rest of their lives."

If you can't make all of your decisions in one session, don't worry. At least put the must-keep-a-back-into-the-closet and keep the others out of sight until you decide.

Once you decide on a look, or looks, best for you, it's time to organize. Lukas and Collins like to organize by the season. Lukas also likes lightweight wools, especially suits and trousers, for year-round use. His formula:

—Keep all year-round dressing in one section. This should be about half of your closet.


—A quarter of your closet should be antique and special items: A fabulous pair of gloves, a great vintage blouse. Keep them in a section away from daily items.

—A quarter should be seasonal items. In fall, the heavy woollens and turtlenecks. In summer, sundresses, swimwear and shorts.

Collins further refines the formula by separating according to silhouette: i.e., loose-fitting fall dresses and suits hang together, sorted by color, and stripped of dry-cleaning bags.

"Visibility is very important," she says. "That's one of the key reasons to get rid of the clutter, so that you can think clearly and see clearly."


"The idea with organizing your closet is that you should open your closets as if you're walking into a room and it's a party and everyone you want to see is there."



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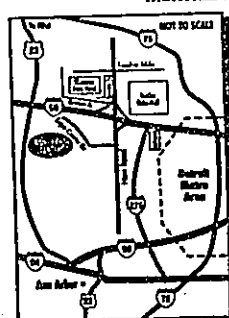
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