

## Organizing Your Closet Efficiently

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Does your closet seem like the Bermuda Triangle or a black hole — clothes go in, but they never come out? Don't call Unsolved Mysteries just yet! Solve the problem by sorting through your belongings, organizing them well and using your closet space in the most efficient way possible. Lowe's is happy to provide this information as a service to you.

### Operate at Maximum Capacity

Begin solving your closet mystery by figuring out how much and what kind of space you need. A tape measure and graph paper will come in handy. Group your clothes by season, length or style. Next, measure the length and width of each group of items.

The best way to maximize closet space is to use two rods, one above the other. You will eliminate wasted space between clothes and the floor. In a man's closet, most items can fit in this double-hung space. Pants will have to be folded over a hanger.

Women's blouses, jackets, slacks and short skirts can also hang on the doubled-up rods. Longer items, like dresses and long skirts, will need to hang on a single, higher rod.

For a typical closet, the upper rod should be about 82" from the floor. The lower rod should be about 42" above the floor. For exact spacing, measure your longest items, including the hanger, and add 4".

If possible, shift coats, formal dresses and other long items that are not worn every day to another closet. That will allow you to install full-width double rods in your primary closet for maximum storage. In many cases, though, you will need a combination of single and double rods. You may also want to put in a narrow shelf or two to store sweaters, shoes or other accessories.

For a child's closet, the bottom rod should be placed low. The upper rod, which will probably be out of the child's reach, can be used to store out-of-season clothes.

With measurements in hand, go to your local Lowe's store. Look at all the styles of shelving and components available to see which one will suit your needs. You will likely be choosing between three materials: coated wire, wood and melamine. Wire products are less expensive and are easily customizable with accessories and add-ons. Solid wood shelving wins accolades for aesthetics, but it costs more and can require more skill to install. Melamine is similar to wood, but is less expensive.

Examining all the choices may even give you some creative inspiration, prompting you to regroup your things and measure again.

### Putting It Together

Prepackaged kits are usually more economical than buying individual components. These kits typically include everything you need to do a 5 to 8-foot wide, reach-in closet. You can also buy extra components and shelving, if you need it.

If you do not want to use a kit, you can buy wire shelving by the linear foot. The store will cut it to the size you need. Be careful to buy all the components from the same manufacturer, because many are not interchangeable.

Look for wire shelves with continuous sliding rods. Known as "SuperSlide" or "FreeSlide" — these allow your hangers to move uninterrupted across the entire bar. You will also find some without rods called linen shelves. These sometimes come in a style with closer mesh that is great for kitchen pantries and other places that might house small items.

Installation for all types of closet systems requires only a drill, screwdriver and hammer. Read *Installing Wire Shelving* for in-depth instructions.

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If you need flexibility in the use of the space, consider using adjustable-height rods and shelves. As fashions change, so do hemlines, and you might want to rearrange your clothing storage. Or a bedroom may become a home office, with a closet that once stored clothing now housing paper, supplies, etc.

If your closet has only a single door, consider enlarging the opening and replacing the door with a pair of wider bi-fold or sliding doors. They allow easier access to the entire closet.

Organization is not just for small closets where every inch counts. Larger, walk-in closets can also benefit from more efficient space utilization. Double rods, built-in drawers, and pullout baskets can all provide more convenient storage in any size closet.

### Shoe Storage

There are many different ways to store shoes. Over-the-door shoe hangers and floor units are two common solutions. You can also organize your shoes in cubbyholes or shelves. Get creative! Some people have built shelves all the way around an entire room for shoes. It's functional and interesting décor at the same time.

### Cut It Out

Give your new closet a fresh start by ridding yourself of the clutter. Just because it came out when you started organizing does not mean it has to go back in.

Consider potential use, rather than past, in deciding what to keep. If you have not worn it at least once in the past year, odds are you will never wear it again. If your weeding process results in a small discard pile, you probably were not ruthless enough. Get a friend who is not emotionally involved to help. He or she might even volunteer to take some of it off your hands.