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Smart, creative ways to keep footwear organized

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The first step to get out of your shoe shuffle funk is to sort and purge



Master bedroom closets can be ground zero for shoe chaos, often serving as a holding pen for seasonal and special occasion footwear.

Few things can trip up your day quite like missing, dirty or dishevelled shoes — especially when you can't find a counterpart for that solo sneaker, slipper, pump or penny loafer. That's why it pays to keep your footwear tidy and arranged via a smart storage scheme, say the experts.

"It's important to give careful thought to keeping your shoes organized," says Mary Cornetta, owner of Sort and Sweet in New York City.

"For one, they are a pair, so if they're stored haphazardly you can easily lose a match. They can also be ruined by things like dust, moisture and mildew if not stored properly."

Plus, they're usually the last things you put on your body before leaving the house.

"By wasting time looking for the right shoes, you run the risk of being late," Cornetta adds.

In addition, shoe clutter can be a major eyesore.

"It doesn't look great when shoes are tossed all over, and they could be the cause of tripping and tumbling. It can also become difficult to keep shoes and floors clean if they are jumbled in a pile together," says Amy Trager, a certified professional organizer in Chicago.

What's more, shoes in disarray can bring added stress to your life.

"The more organized your shoes are in your home, the more you'll feel in control and the better the chance that they'll stay in good shape and last longer," says Angela Murray, a Fanwood, N.J.-headquartered organization specialist.

Rebecca Nocheck with Cincinnati-headquartered Organized Living, a storage and organization systems manufacturer, believes the best spots to store and organize shoes are closest to the source.

"In other words, wherever you have the most shoes is the space you need to add shoe storage solutions to," says Nocheck. "Most people have shoe storage near their home's front door, in a nearby closet, or a mudroom."

Of course, master bedroom closets can be ground zero for shoe chaos, too, often serving as a holding pen for seasonal and special-occasion footwear.

The first step to get out of your shoe shuffle funk is to sort and purge.

"Get rid of any shoes that no longer fit, are worn down and cannot be repaired, are out of style or that you no longer like," suggests Nocheck, noting that unwanted shoes in good condition can be donated.

"Only keep the shoes that matter and store away the rest."

Murray recommends practical stowing practices.

"As a goal, you should store the shoes you wear the least more toward harder-to-reach spaces in the back. More frequently worn shoes should be stored toward the front so they can be easily accessible," says Murray.

"Wherever you choose to store your shoes, remember that you can save space by placing shoe pairs together from heel to toe" (e.g., left shoe facing north, right shoe facing south).

It's wise to pick a climate-controlled location for shoe storage.

"You want to be sure they're not in a damp area like a basement or garage," Murray says.

Trager advises grouping shoes together by family member or type: athletic shoes in one spot, boots in another, for example.

"Next, measure whatever space is preferred for shoe storage and count the number of shoes that ideally will be kept there," says Trager. "Avoid buying any kind of shoe storage system or organizing product until you've done this math."

When it comes to products designed to restore shoe sanity, a variety of solutions exist. These include shoe shelves, cubbies, racks, bins and stackable boxes.

"A simple behind-the-door shoe rack is always helpful. And an under-the-bed, narrow-profile shoe organizer is a good investment as well," says Murray.

Nocheck believes the best solution is to choose a system or products that you and your family will use consistently.

"It should be a system that works within your given space and lifestyle," says Nocheck.

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