COVER STORY

SPRING-CLEANING WEEK | CLOSET

Get chaos out of the closet

By ERIN WHITE ewhite@star-telegram.com

If you're a perennial pack rat, cleaning out your closet might generate as much excitement as a 24-hour C-Span marathon.

But even if you eagerly anticipate "editing" your wardrobe each time the seasons change, tidying your drawers, racks and bins can seem like an overwhelming task.

We consulted some local organizational pros, and here are the expert tips they offer to ease closet clutter:

First task: clear it out

Before you organize anything, remove everything from the closet so that you can dust, vacuum and organize. Then, purge, purge, purge. Be ruthless. Ask yourself, "Am I willing to touch this every morning?" If the answer isn't "yes," toss it. If you haven't worn it or used it a year, toss it. If it doesn't fit, toss it, even if you think it might fit again later.

Trim the fat

If you need to, enlist the help of a trusted friend. Try on your clothes for them and get rid of anything they don't deem flattering.

In addition, every time you change clothes for the season, take some time to go through and get rid of items you no longer wear.

Once you've pared down your wardrobe, put clothes back in the closet by type: hang shirts and blouses together, skirts together and pants and slacks together.

Some organizers even recommend grouping within the grouping by placing sleeveless shirts together, short sleeves together, long sleeves together, and arranging them in color order.

Or organize based on when you wear clothes: put work outfits together, weekend outfits together, dress outfits together.

Additional organizational tips

■ Place the clothes that you wear most often at the front of the closet.

■ Don't leave empty hangers in the middle of clothes. Designate a spot in the closet and hang them together. This keeps them from taking up space and snagging on garments.

■ Make sure everything in your closet has a home. If you're having trouble finding a place for something, chuck it. It doesn't mean that much to you.

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Donating and consigning

There are four simple ways to get rid of clothing: donation or resale, and thrift or consignment shops. Resale shops buy merchandise outright, and consignment shops take merchandise, sell it, and give the original owner a portion of the sale. Thrift shops can work on a donation, resale or consignment basis.

If you plan to donate the clothing you no longer want, try a local Goodwill or a resale shop like the YWCA resale shop at 8139 Camp Bowie West, Benbrook. Mission Arlington makes it even easier by picking up donations.

"You'll probably make more money on the reduction of your taxes than you will with a garage sale," says Sandy Morgan, a professional organizer and owner of Get Morganized. "And it's a lot easier."

Here are some guidelines for donating clothing

1. Get a tax receipt. You have to have this for the write-off.

2. Only items in wearable and usable condition can be donated.

3. You're allowed to claim your items are worth "fair market value." The Salvation Army has a valuation guide with suggestions at www.salvationarmy.com. Click on donate, then receipts, then valuation guide. According to the guide, a women's sweater could be worth a deduction of $3.75 or $15.

4. In order to get a tax receipt, you have to donate to a 501c3 charity or qualified religious organization, such as the Salvation Army, the American Red Cross, Vietnam Veterans of America or Dress for Success.

5. Keep good records. To get the tax break, you'll have to itemize. You'll be more likely to get the higher deduction for items that still have tags or receipts.

6. If you donate more than $500 worth of stuff, you'll need to fill out Form 8283, and you'll have to describe what you donated and give the name and address of the charity. For noncash deductions worth less than $250, you can just ballpark the value of the goods.

Consignment tips

If you're looking to make a little money, consider consignment. Here are 10 things to consider when trying to get the most buck for your old duds:

1. Unusual items with character and flair often sell well.

2. Think accessories — purses, shoes and interesting jewelry move quickly.

3. Brand names are best. Clothing from recognizable designers, such as Ellen Tracy or Marc Jacobs, will generally sell much better than clothing from Target. You're better off donating that to a charity and taking the tax write-off.

4. Sell clothing quickly and stay in season. Consignment shops don't want sweaters now or bathing suits in December, and anything more than two or three seasons old usually doesn't sell.

5. Keep receipts and leave the tags on. This will help you negotiate a better price because the shop can charge more.

6. Clean up your stuff. Even a scuff on a shoe or a pen mark in a purse can greatly decrease value.

7. Call ahead to see what kinds of items a store needs.

8. Take merchandise in early in the week, before the shop has been inundated and while it still has time to ready the items for weekend shoppers.

9. Don't expect to make your money back. Consignment shops charge about 1/4 of original price and you'll likely get no more than 40 percent of that sale price.

10. For more tips, log on to www.narts.org, the Web site of the National Association of Resale & Thrift Shops.

Sources: Abby Jones, co-owner of Feminine Fashions Consignment, 6387G Camp Bowie Blvd., Fort Worth; Barbra Horowitz, personal stylist and author of *Closet Control* (Sterling, $22.95); Donna King, owner of Western Wear Exchange, 2809 Alta Mere Dr., Fort Worth; www.bankrate.com; www.smartmoney.com; www.salvationarmy.com

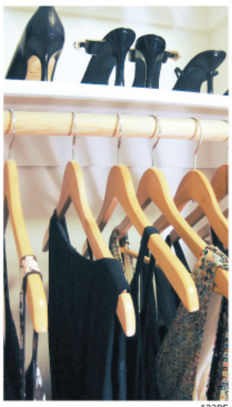
Tools to use

To keep closets from promptly spiraling into utter chaos, everything must have a proper place, experts say. They've recommended a handful of goods that will maximize space and keep items orderly.

■ Elfa storage drawers from the Container Store (or a similar product from Wal-Mart or Target) come highly recommended by professional organizers for shoes, purses, sweaters or odds and ends. Drawers start at $11 each and frames at $36 at the Container Store.

■ Invest in a double-hanging rod — a second rod that hangs from the higher rod, essentially doubling hanging space. You can find them at Target for about $20.

■ Ask your dry cleaner for one of the cardboard triangles they use to keep hangers neat and put one in your closet. When it's full, return the hangers to the cleaners.



123RF

■ Hanging racks can make organization a breeze. You can buy them made for a specific purpose, such as an over-the-door rack for purses. Or buy a set of hanging shelves and use each shelf for something different.

■ Add hooks for purses, hats and belts to open walls. Make the most of your vertical space.

■ Clear plastic boxes make ideal storage spaces for random bits and pieces and keep purses and seldom-used shoes from getting dusty. They also help keep shelves neat.

■ If you keep extra blankets and pillows in the closet, space-saver bags work wonders and free up space.

■ If you keep jewelry in the closet, buy a tie rack. Necklaces, hoops, dangly earrings and rings will hang neatly. Buy a small jewelry box for the rest.

■ If you have room, add baskets for laundry and dry cleaning.

■ Don't store shoes on the floor. If you're tall enough, use your closet shelf or buy a shoe rack for the door or floor. You can also convert a plastic sweater bag into a shoe and purse holder.

■ Buy matching hangers.

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Sources: Tyler Norsworthy, owner of Fort Worth's An Extra Pair of Hands; Debbie Periman, owner of Fort Worth's Clutter Flies; Sandy Morgan, owner of Fort Worth's Get Morganized; Brenda Hutchins, owner of Arlington's All About Details

Tarrant County consignment shops

Here are six shops that take gently used clothing, and tips for what they want:

Feminine Fashions Consignment
6387 Camp Bowie Blvd., Fort Worth, 817-315-2687
What it takes: Ladies' clothing and accessories; no evening wear or lingerie.
Sizes: 0-16
A good tip: Designer spring items, especially tops, jeans, skirts and dresses are in high demand right now.
Quality control: Recognizable brand names, such as Banana Republic or Prada, are preferred.

Gentry Men's Resale
8218 Boulevard 26, North Richland Hills, 817-428-4196; www.gentrymenswear.com
What it takes: Men's clothing in all styles, from casual to formal wear.
Sizes: Juniors' size 16 up to men's size 60
A good tip: Items that can be worn all year, such as dress shirts and shoes, are always in demand.
Quality control: The store wants items purchased within the past two years.

Kid to Kid
Locations across Tarrant County
What it takes: Children's clothing, shoes, toys, books, car seats, strollers and more.
Sizes: Newborn to boys' and girls' size 14
A good tip: Kid to Kid buys clothing; it doesn't work on consignment. They're only taking spring and summer items right now.
Quality control: Everything should be boxed neatly and clean. The store doesn't take bedding.

North's Plus Size Resale Boutique
3901 W. Arkansas Lane, Arlington, 817-303-9495
What it takes: Ladies' clothing
Sizes: 14 and up
A good tip: Spring and summer only right now.
Quality control: Name-brand only.

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Once Upon a Child
Locations across Tarrant County
What it takes: Children's clothes, toys, equipment accessories.
Sizes: Newborn through boys' and girls' size 14
A good tip: Strollers, walkers and swings are particularly popular right now.
Quality control: Equipment must be in working condition and clothing can't have stains or tears.

Plato's Closet
Locations across Tarrant County
What it takes: Teen and young adult clothing.
Sizes: 0-16
A good tip: Plato's Closet pays directly instead of consigning and will buy all types of clothing year-round.
Quality control: Plato's Closet typically buys only clothing that has been in retail stores within the past 18 months.

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DIGITAL PRESENTATION
21 (PG13) 1:55, 5:00, 7:45, 10:30
LEATHERHEADS (PG13) ✓ 1:10, 2:10, 4:05, 5:05, 7:00, 7:40, 9:50, 10:20
NIM'S ISLAND (PG) ✓ 1:00, 3:20, 5:35, 7:55, 10:25
THE RUINS (R) ✓ 1:35, 4:20, 6:45, 9:10
SHINE A LIGHT (PG13) ✓ 1:00, 3:45, 6:40, 9:30
21 (PG13) 1:05, 4:10, 7:10, 9:55
STOP-LOSS (R) 10:15, 3:55, 6:30, 9:15
SUPERHERO MOVIE (PG13) 2:15, 5:20, 7:25, 9:35
DRILLBIT TAYLOR (PG13) 1:50, 4:25, 6:50, 9:25
SHUTTER (PG13) 1:30, 3:30, 5:50, 8:05, 10:15
TYLER PERRY'S MEET THE BROWNS (PG13) 2:20, 5:15, 7:35, 10:15
DR. SEUSS' HORTON HEARS A WHO (G) 1:40, 4:35, 7:05, 9:20
NEVER BACK DOWN (PG13) 1:15, 4:15, 6:55, 9:30
10,000 B.C. (PG13) 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 9:45
COLLEGE ROAD TRIP (G) 1:25, 3:40, 5:45, 10:00
VANTAGE POINT (PG13) 7:50
AMC SELECT
RUN FAT BOY RUN (PG13) 2:00, 5:40, 8:00, 10:20
UNDER THE SAME MOON (PG13) 1:20, 4:40, 7:20, 10:05

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THE RUINS (R) ✓ 2:50, 5:35, 8:00, 10:20
21 (PG13) 1:45, 4:30, 7:20, 10:10
SUPERHERO MOVIE (PG13) 1:55, 4:40, 7:25, 9:30
DRILLBIT TAYLOR (PG13) 2:20, 5:00, 7:30, 9:55
TYLER PERRY'S MEET THE BROWNS (PG13) 2:40, 5:25, 7:50, 10:15
DR. SEUSS' HORTON HEARS A WHO (G) 2:05, 4:50, 7:10, 9:20
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◆ 21 (PG13) 1210 140 310 440 610 730 910 1025
◆ RUN, FAT BOY, RUN (PG13) 1215 300 530 805 1035
◆ STOP LOSS (R) ①125 420 715 1005
◆ SUPERHERO MOVIE (PG13) 1220 250 515 755 1010
10,000 B.C. (PG13) 710 955
COLLEGE ROAD TRIP (G) 1205 225 505 725 950
DRILLBIT TAYLOR (PG13) 1200 240 640 930
HORTON HEARS A WHO (G) 1155 115 230 340 450 620 735 900 1000
THE BANK JOB (R) ①1235 405 650 945
THE OTHER BOLEYN GIRL (PG13) 135 425
TYLER PERRY'S MEET THE BROWNS (PG13) 1225 305 535 805 1035
VANTAGE POINT (PG13) 155 430 705 940

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10,000 B.C. (PG13) 740PM
DRILLBIT TAYLOR (PG13) 435 735 1035
HORTON HEARS A WHO (G) 425 725 1025
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◆ THE RUINS (R) ①250 525 750 1025
◆ 21 (PG13) 155 440 730 1020
◆ SUPERHERO MOVIE (PG13) 240 435 710 940
10,000 B.C. (PG13) 1010PM
COLLEGE ROAD TRIP (G) 230 505 750
DRILLBIT TAYLOR (PG13) 235 500 725 955
HORTON HEARS A WHO (G) 305 520 745 1000
NEVER BACK DOWN (PG13) 215 455 735 1015
SHUTTER (PG13) 225 510 715 935
TYLER PERRY'S MEET THE BROWNS (PG13) 245 515 755 1020
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FOOL'S GOLD (PG13) 415 710 950
HORTON HEARS A WHO (G) 400 430 500 530 645 715 745 815 915 945 1010
NEVER BACK DOWN (PG13) 420 715 1000
SEMI-PRO (R) ①440 730 955
STEP UP 2 THE STREETS (PG13) 435 720 1005
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THE RUINS (R) - ID REQ'D (1240 300 515) 800 1020
THE SUPER HERO MOVIE (PG-13) (1210 240 500) 730 945
21 (PG-13) (1245 410) 700 950
SHUTTER (PG-13) (1215 230 445) 720 930
TYLER PERRY'S: MEET THE BROWNS (PG-13) (100 450) 750 1015
DRILLBIT TAYLOR (PG-13) (1230 430) 710 940
HORTON HEARS A WHO (G) (1200 225 440) 655 920

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Adv. Tix on Sale CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: PRINCE CASPIAN (PG) ★
THE RUINS (R) - ID REQ'D (1230 255 520) 745 1010
NIM'S ISLAND (PG) ★ (1205 230 455) 720 955
LEATHERHEADS (PG-13) (1255 415) 705 1000
STOP LOSS (R) - ID REQ'D (110 415) 735 1020
THE SUPER HERO MOVIE (PG-13) (1245 305 525) 740 1005
OC: 21 (PG-13) (400) 1025
21 (PG-13) (100) 700
SHUTTER (PG-13) (1225 240 500) 725 950
TYLER PERRY'S: MEET THE BROWNS (PG-13) (1215 245 515) 755 1025
DRILLBIT TAYLOR (PG-13) (105 410) 710 1015
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RUN FAT BOY RUN (PG-13) 1:20, 3:50, 6:20, 8:50pm
SUPERHERO MOVIE (PG-13) 12:50, 3:00, 5:10, 7:20, 9:30pm
DRILLBIT TAYLOR (PG-13) 1:10, 3:30, 6:10, 8:50pm
SHUTTER (PG-13) 2:10, 4:20, 6:30, 9:00pm
UNDER THE SAME MOON (PG-13) 1:40, 4:10, 6:40, 9:10pm
HORTON HEARS A WHO! (G) 1:40, 4:10, 6:50, 9:00pm
NEVER BACK DOWN (PG-13) 9:20pm
COLLEGE ROAD TRIP (G) 1:30, 3:40, 6:10, 8:30pm
THE BANK JOB (R) 2:00, 4:30, 7:10, 9:40pm
VANTAGE POINT (PG-13) 1:00, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, 9:40pm
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