



## Hide your clutter like a pro with these ideas

Deena Bouknight

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This past spring, Gallup revealed that the majority of white-collar workers who had suddenly found themselves working remotely at the start of the pandemic in March of 2020, are still working remotely.

“Remote work rates exceed 80% in some occupations,” the Gallup report confirmed.

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And just last June, the Cato Institute shared that fall 2021’s kindergarten enrollment was down and virtual and homeschooling rates were climbing.

It is no surprise then, that with an increase in children staying home to learn, as well as adults continuing to work from home, organization and orderliness in the home can prove challenging—no matter your dwelling space.

A desk used pre-pandemic for managing bills and budgets may have become a full-fledged home office space, while a dining area has been transformed from eating area to classroom.

Keeping a handle on home organization and tidiness is possible, whether the home involves minimal apartment square footage or a multi-storied house. In fact, there are ways to contain clutter decoratively.

We talked to a couple of organization experts who provide insight and strategies to accomplish a beautiful décor in the midst of disorder.

### **Organize smarter with multi-use furniture**

Marty Basher, home design and organization expert for DIY storage/closet units maker Modular Closets, says, “Think double duty when it comes to combining, decorating, and organizing. For example, ottomans, poufs, and coffee tables that open and have storage inside: lift the lid,

and, *voilà!* [It is] storage for blankets, books, games, or other items. This kind of double-function furniture item is particularly useful in smaller spaces where there might not be extra shelving available.”

Basher has many creative organizing ideas. He suggests using a vintage steamer trunk at the end of a bed to hold extra pillows, blankets, linens, or off-season clothes.

“This is also a great option for a child’s room,” he advises. “[It’s] a place to put the extra toys and yet it also creates extra seating.”

A stack of vintage suitcases in ever smaller sizes, placed in a corner to house all sorts of stuff is as pretty as it is secretive. A bean bag case filled with stuffed animals or Beanie Babies instead of standard filler serves a storage purpose and delights the little ones, as does a colorful print hammock hung in the corner of in a child’s room or a playroom to keep stuffed animals and other sundry toys off floors.

Libby Langdon is an interior designer, author, product designer, and makeover television personality, as well as the creative force behind the New York City–based design firm, Libby Interiors, Inc. She shares double-duty organizational ideas that are both attractive and functional, such as using four bed lifts to raise a bed up at least six inches to create more room for storage space underneath.

“The look of a higher bed is very luxurious; just buy a longer dust skirt,” Langdon explains.

Like Basher, Langdon also supports placing all types of storage ottomans in spaces where they work to “hold everything from paperwork and files to extra bedding or remote controls and magazines. They can act as extra seating and as a cocktail table, and you can also group four small cube ottomans together as your coffee table. When you want to put a drink or food down, just put a neat tray on top of them.”

Basher adds, “Ottomans can be seating, a footrest, or a coffee table; a tall kitchen rolling cart can act as a bar, extra workspace, and storage; and, a desk can be a dining table as well.”

### **Get your kitchen space in order**

Colorful and/or distinct baskets, whether natural materials or plastic, contain clutter in cabinets, pantries, on countertops, and even in the freezer. They “make it easier to store by type, so you know where to look for what you need,” says Basher.

Make sure not to neglect the top-of-the-fridge space. “While the top of the fridge is often a repository for extra items, you can make it attractive by using a cubby for cookbooks. It’s an easy access, out-of-the-way, underused space,” he says.

Basher proposes sprucing up a kitchen and still keeping it under control by using some elegant glass mason jars or canisters to hold cereals and pastas. “Adding a label on the front made from

chalkboard paint also means you can change up what each one contains, quickly and easily, all the while giving the jars a quirky, vintage feel,” he says.

### **Use outside-the-(storage)-box thinking**

Langdon likes to find ingenious ways to use common items in a home. For example, her dust skirt storage trick involves a standard, hanging shoe-storage cloth organizer tucked at one end under a mattress so that it falls down the side of a dust skirt, but over the box spring. You can stash remote controls, magazines, slippers, a few books, and more in this DIY spot.

Langdon also recommends mounting a row of clipboards, in various colors or the same color, along a hallway wall. “On the bottom of each clipboard, screw in cup hooks so they go through the clipboard and into the wall,” she instructs, adding that the space can be used for memos, outgoing mail, and reminders under the metal clasp part of the clipboard. Bags, keys, and hats can hang from the cup hooks below.

With more children as well as adults schooling from home, books and sundry reading materials can overwhelm spaces, but Langdon has a solution.

“Stack your largest oversized books on a plant dolly/stand that has casters,” she says. “Include as many as possible (almost up to 18 inches high); it can easily be moved, and it will also double as a small side table.”

### **Get creative to keep the mess to a minimum**

Especially with cold weather’s entrance, Basher expresses, “If you don’t want to face a pile of items that don’t have a designated home in the mudroom or entrance hall closet, you need to get ahead of the game.”

Sturdy decorative baskets or bins—even old soda crates (available in many antique stores)—are spots to keep hats, gloves, scarves, socks, and more. The same goes for storage benches that can easily sit in your entryway, while keeping clutter contained.

Langdon’s tip for the mudroom and other spaces is to use an attractive print or solid material canvas gardening tools apron to house “just about anything.” In a work space it can store office supplies, in a craft room it can hold art supplies, and in a kitchen, it can hold utensils, silverware, and napkins.”

For hobbyists and Santa’s helpers, an all-in-one craft/wrapping paper storage station may prove incredibly useful for harnessing clutter. Langdon again suggests an apron—this time, a tool apron placed around a five-gallon big white plastic bucket.

“Put all the rolls of wrapping paper inside the bucket,” says Langdon, “and in the pockets of the apron place scissors, tape, tissue paper, ribbons, bows, markers, and gift cards.”

When it comes to home organization, Basher offers this general advice: “Look at anything you could use to organize your home, and there’s probably a way to make it prettier and part of the décor.”