

When preparing for the perfect closet, your goal is to come up with a system that will allow you to maintain the de-cluttered space with minimal effort, while allowing you to make the most of your space, time, and wardrobe. Remember that your closet works in conjunction with other storage spaces as well.

1. Closets should have a clean, fresh coat of light-colored paint. This reflects the light and gives you a solid neutral background to view your clothing against. Take the time to do this now. Give the closet a good vacuuming and dusting, too.
2. Start sorting. Separate your closet into work and casual wear by item type, then group similar items by color. Button-down shirts, dress pants, blazers, dresses, skirts, etc. should all be batched together so you can quickly see and assess your options. Make a separate pile for each category of casual clothing, such as pants, t-shirts, and sweatshirts. Also group together shoes, belts, and other accessories.
3. Only keep your "A" team or current clothes in your main closet. Shift seasonal clothes, maternity, and "other size" items to another storage space, such as under your bed. Many people can reduce the amount of clothing in their closet by half if they follow this guideline.
4. Purge a little more. Once you have everything sorted, you may discover that you own multiples of the same item. This is your chance to get rid of those items that don't fit, are out of style, or are not practical. (From here on out, keep a give-away box in your closet to make donating easier.) Remember, it's important to let your clothing have a little breathing room to keep it wrinkle-free, as well as to allow you to easily view your closet's contents.
5. Now that you can see what you actually have, start measuring. Most clothing needs 1/2 to two inches of space per item. How much of your clothing can you realistically fit in the closet? If it only has one rod across the top, you may want to consider redesigning your closet for maximum space efficiency. Consider simple, inexpensive modifications such as adding a double hang closet rod to double your hanging space. You may also be able to adjust your shelves and rods to better accommodate your space needs.
6. Return clothing to the closet. Organize your clothes to work with your lifestyle. Section garments by type, then by color, so you can always easily see what you have. Hang pants, blazers, button-front shirts, dresses, and skirts. Don't put matching tops and bottoms together, since this stops you from seeing other ways to combine them. Arrange clothes so those you wear most often are nearest the front of the closet.
7. Find storage containers that are sturdy and sized appropriately. Use containers you already own or shop for new ones at stores like Target or The Container Store. Sweaters, t-shirts, and sweatshirts line up nicely on shelves with the help of vertical shelf dividers or when placed in clear plastic boxes or hanging canvas shelves. Accessories such as purses, scarves, and belts can be placed in clear boxes or attractive wicker baskets on open shelves.
8. Assign each item a "home." Designate a shelf, section of rod, or drawer for each category of clothing. You're likely to return items to this space after every use. Come up with a system that will allow you to maintain the de-cluttered space with minimal effort. Also, install adequate lighting that will allow you to view all of your clothing and shelf space.