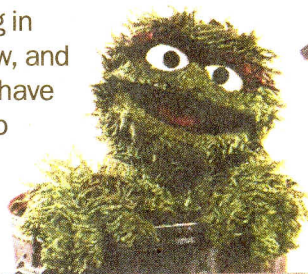


Out with the old

Who says you have to do all your spring cleaning in one weekend? Tackle a few small projects now, and when the warm weather is here to stay, you'll have time to enjoy it. Don't worry. We're not going to tell you to wash your windows and sweep the garage in February. We'll focus on organizing the inside of your house and keep it from looking like Oscar the Grouch lives there.



It's a bedroom, not a clothes hamper

■ **A bedroom is supposed to be a sanctuary**, but when you're tripping over laundry and can't find pajamas in your disaster of a dresser, serenity is hard to achieve.

■ **Instead of just hoping to get back into clothes**, set a time limit. Pack all your Size 2 clothes in a box. If you're not there in six months or a year, donate them.

■ **If your closet's tiny, rotate clothes by season.** In the winter, store summer clothes in a basement or attic.

■ **Use the "like with like" technique.** Hang all pants together, all jackets together, etc., or hang all work clothes together and all casual clothes together.

■ **Don't run out and buy storage containers.** Use things you have, like shoeboxes, baskets, crates and shopping bags.

Source: professional organizer Maggie Jackson, owner of the Organized Life, Cedar Rapids

Cut the cosmetics ... and other bathroom junk

■ **Why is your bathroom cluttered?** Probably because you have 10 bottles of shampoo, three tubes of toothpaste, six tubes of lotion and a bunch of makeup you don't use. Get rid of products and medications that you don't like or that are expired.

■ **Sort using a "like with like" system.** Put the first-aid stuff in one basket, the hair products in one basket and so on. Keep items you use most on top. Have a family? Give each person his or her own basket.

■ **To keep the bathroom organized:**

Finish one product before opening another, and take the extra 10 seconds to return

things to their places after you get ready.



Whaddya need to know?
Send ideas to features@gazettecommunications.com

Ditch the electric banana peeler

OK, it's time to focus your attention on the kitchen:

■ **Electric gadgets take up lots of space.** How often do you use that ice cream maker? The waffle iron? Tuck them into the back of a cupboard, and reserve the easy-to-reach space for things you use more. If your kitchen is small, store small appliances elsewhere, like the basement.

■ **People tend to collect cups, mugs and plastic containers.** Do you need a cup to commemorate every ballgame you've seen? Will you ever have enough leftovers to use ALL of those containers? Toss (recycle) containers without lids, and keep only a couple of each size. Keep only as many cups/mugs as you can use.

■ **Plan a pantry raid.** Throw out the expired food.

■ **Be strategic about what goes where.** A lot depends on the kitchen's layout, but try to put pots, pans, spices and oven mitts near the stove, and plates and glasses by the sink or dishwasher. Avoid stacking dishes too high.

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Bed, Bath & Beyond