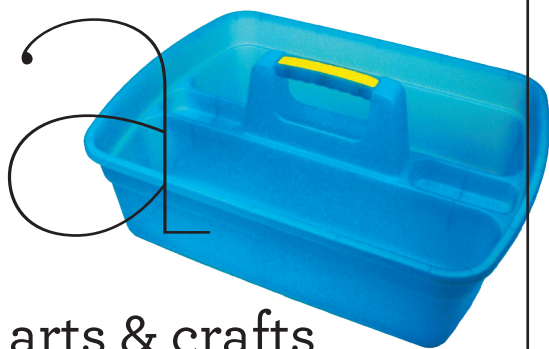


# Organizing



Follow our letter-perfect tips for containing family clutter.

BY KIM FUSARO



## arts & crafts supplies

Asha Dornfest, founder of the blog [parenthacks.com](http://parenthacks.com), suggests using a divided plastic caddy as a portable art station for markers, colored pencils and papers. "This way, it's easy for kids to carry the bin from room to room."

*Romanoff Super Utility Caddy; organize.com, \$9*

## B

### balls

Store balls of all sizes along with mitts and bats in big, clear plastic containers on a low shelf in the garage, says Susan C. Pinsky, author of *The Fast and Furious Five Step Organizing Solution* (Fair Winds Press), and mother of three. "Avoid ones that are deep or opaque, because you'll have to dump everything out whenever you need something," she says.

## C

### clothes

Before embarking on back to school shopping, empty your kids' closets and take inventory, says Nicole Abramovici and Julia Wright, the pros behind [geniusorganizing.com](http://geniusorganizing.com). Toss damaged goods and donate items that don't fit or have never been worn. Keep old tees to rip up for rags. Give away anything you think you might mend or your kids won't wear. Label bins and baskets to keep order.



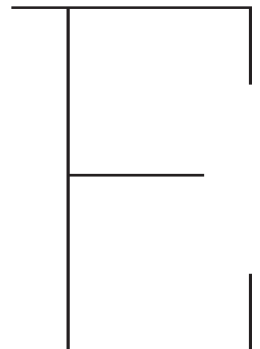
Photo (closet): Greg Scheidemann.





## dvds

Even with On Demand and Netflix, a few favorite movies are worth keeping out on a shelf near the flatscreen. "Avoid under-cabinet racks that obscure your view," says Pinsky. And don't bother with tedious categories—Comedies? Noir?—just alphabetize. A shoebox-size bin right next to the TV can hold the 10 or so movies your kids reach for most often. *Mainstays 4pk Canvas Bins in Ruby Light, walmart.com, \$20*



## electrical cords

There's no need to invest in fancy cord grabbers, says Abramovici. Small jaw-style hair clips can hold the wrapped-up wire of your cell phone charger; jumbo-size clips secure the cords behind your entertainment system in a neat bundle.



# F

## family schedule

Try a single online calendar if you think everyone in the house can commit to entering their own appointments, suggests Abramovici. If not, look for a paper calendar designed for families. *WhoMi Clarity Compact Agenda*, [whomi.com](http://whomi.com), \$25



## games

Place an ottoman with a lift-off top near the TV where you can stash video controls and kids' games out of sight, says Pinsky. Keep tabs on cords and chargers by labeling with stickers. *Gerber Storage Bench in Surf*, [target.com](http://target.com), \$200



# K

## kitchen counter

Keep your kids from trashing the kitchen by setting up an after-school snack station. Leave a tray on the counter with everything they'll need for a quick bite, including no-cook options, paper plates and napkins.



## jewelry

A clear compartmentalized jewelry tray on top of your daughter's dresser is the most practical way to corral rings, earrings, bracelets, nail polish and other small stuff. *Shallow Trays*, [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com), from \$6

## homework

Create a permanent space for supplies in the kitchen or family room by stocking containers with pens, highlighters and such, says Wright. Hang a dry-erase board nearby so that kids can track when big projects and term papers are due.



# i

## incoming mail

Reduce paper clutter by recycling correspondence you don't need. Instead of shredding, which is a time killer, tear up credit card offers and bills—most only list the last four numbers of your account—and throw in the recycling bin. "Save the shredder for anything with your birthday and Social Security number, like an old tax return," says Pinsky.

# L

## laundry

If your laundry room is a mess, keep bras, slips and other small dangly items out of the way with a drying rack that holds up to 16 items at once, collapses for storage—and comes in assorted colors. *Pressa hanging dryer, ikea.com, \$5*



## mudroom

Eliminate early morning chaos by designating an area by the back door or entryway as a “launching pad” with a basket for each family member, suggests Dornfest. Before bedtime backpacks and projects are stored in baskets for retrieval the next morning.

# n

## numbers

Rather than posting a central list of phone numbers, just enter the most important ones—doctor, dentist, school, coach—in your cell phone and your husband's. Kids and sitters should call a parent before dialing the doctor—and know to dial 911 first in a true emergency.

# r

## rain gear

A shoe rack and a few hooks in the garage for raincoats, umbrellas and boots will keep the floors of your living space dry.



## quizzes & papers

Stow a durable plastic accordion file folder with a pocket labeled for each child by the space where they do their homework, suggests Wright. Get everyone in the habit of putting graded quizzes and tests and other papers into the file at the end of each day for your review.

# S

## sink chaos

Offer extra storage space for kids' toothbrushes, hair tools and whatever else clutters the bathroom counter. Pinsky likes see-through over-the-door shoe racks and unbreakable containers of all sizes.



## outdoor furniture

A waterproof armoire or chest will ensure cushions and small items like lanterns and votives stay clean and dry until everything is stored for winter in the garage. *Ciudad Outdoor Mocha Trunk, pier1.com, \$240*

# P

## photos

If you haven't cleared summer's photos from your camera, upload them now to a site like Google's Picasa, which allows you to share pictures with friends and family, who can then download them for free. Order prints of favorites to swap into existing frames, suggests Pinsky.

# tubs

Unless you regularly use plastic containers for school lunches, pare down to five or six basic pieces. If you need more storage for occasional big dinners, your everyday dishes plus plastic wrap and ziptop bags will get the job done.



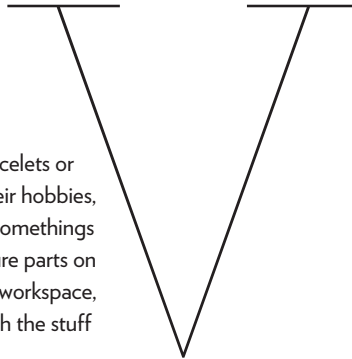
# U

## undergarments

The trick to organizing underwear is not to bother. Place unfolded bras and panties in one drawer and sift through the jumble daily to find what you need. "Any other system is a waste of time," says Pinsky.

## very small things

Maybe your daughter makes beaded bracelets or your son builds model cars—whatever their hobbies, chances are there are a million itty-bitty somethings strewn around your home. Corral miniature parts on rimmed cookie sheets to keep order at a workspace, suggests Dornfest. Between projects stash the stuff in ziptop bags and store in a container.



# W

## wheels

To cut down on clutter don't let anything with wheels inside your home—including bikes, scooters and skateboards. "Park them in the garage," says Abramovici. Save floor space by hanging everything on oversize hooks.



# XYZ...

For all the other ways to get organized, visit [familycircle.com/organizing](http://familycircle.com/organizing)