

the [♥]comfort of things

AN ORGANISED WARDROBE

There are certain things in your home that are like old friends: they always cheer you up. We feel the love for the ease that come from a cupboard full of orderly clothes

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Are you ever overwhelmed when standing in front of your wardrobe? It may be full of clothes but there's not one thing you want to wear. Time is running out and you need to leave the house but all you can see is a jumble of items. There is probably something in there that will do the job, but it's a question of finding it.

Imagine, then, how it would feel if that wardrobe was gutted of all extraneous stuff. Be gone dress bought in foolish anticipation of miraculous shape shifting! Farewell preposterous yellow shoes bought in a misguided moment of flamboyance!

Instead there will be neat rails of things that you actually like to wear. You'll be able to browse a row of skirts and be spoilt for choice, then delve into a stack of folded jumper. Your tights will be coiled tidily in a drawer. It sounds like an

"The days of wardrobes big enough to house a surprised lover are over"

impossible dream, but it is within the grasp of all of us.

Whereas Carrie Bradshaw's floor-to-ceiling racks of shoes and extravagant clothing feel excessive now, there is still much to be said for wardrobe management, just on a more modest scale. Unwanted and discarded clothes are a massive environmental problem (for more on ethical fashion see issue 75), so much of the answer lies in buying wisely in the first place. Start by taking wardrobe clutter to the charity shop or selling on Ebay, and then you have space to rethink and re-organise.

The days of mahogany wardrobes big enough to house a surprised lover are over. Instead we have sleek built-in storage systems and clever flatplack units with cantilevered rails and strip lighting that invite orderliness. In an ideal world, part of the home would be designated a dressing area with an ironing board and full-length mirror at the ready. Space is a premium for most of us, though, so your own section of a wardrobe must do. Just make sure no one else in the household encroaches on to your rails. It's up to them to get their gear into gear. »



A GUIDE TO CLOTHES HANGERS

The first step towards wardrobe management

WOODEN

Much the most attractive option and nothing says 'orderly' like a row of wooden hangers all facing the same way. Some are shaped to suit jackets, some have a bar on which to hang trousers, and others are made of cedar to prevent moisture. There's a huge selection at thehangerstore.co.uk, starting from 82p each.

MULTIPLE AND TIERED

A neat option when space is tight: you can layer several skirts or pairs of trousers from one hook and clip in place to secure. Four and six tiers are available, from £6.98, at containerstore.com.

PADDED

Although they have a hint of Granny's wardrobe about them, these are an ideal choice for dresses and jumpers. A padded hanger will not introduce unwanted bumps in fabric or damage it, so Granny really does know best. You can find satin padded hangers with a cute ribbon bow for £4.95 at hangerworld.com.

METAL

This is a style worth avoiding unless you are considering opening a dry cleaning business. Clothes slip off them and generally sit uncomfortably. Reasonably priced though, for budget lovers: £5.95 for 10, at hangerworld.com.

OK, so your own clothes may be a little more merlot-proof than these, but restoring order to your wardrobe is a task worth making time for. Chambery Grey wardrobe, from £599, cotswoldco.com

THREE TO MAKE, BUY OR CUSTOMISE

Get all over your untidy shoe piles and jumbles of stuff by introducing some storage cunning. There are plenty of options to buy or you can fashion some yourself



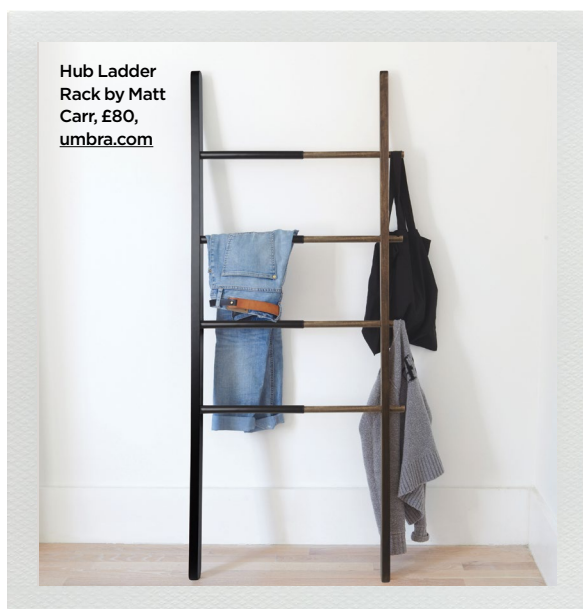
1 Make
The Shakers knew a thing or two about an orderly home: peg rails skirting around rooms were used to keep everything from tea towels to chairs off the floor. Channel a little of their creativity and make your own peg rail, fix on a wall or on the inside of a wardrobe door, and hang scarves, jewellery, bags and sundries on it. Buy screw-in hardwood Shaker pegs (these are from Ebay, £9 for 10) and fix to a piece of 4x2 timber at measured intervals. Paint your choice of colour and you're all set.



2 Buy
Shoe racks have their limitations – never being able to accommodate enough shoes being their main shortcoming – but there's no denying their usefulness. Try to avoid the temptation to go cheap, though, and buy one that will last – a sturdy and dependable piece of furniture that will continue to do its job for years. This one by House at John Lewis, £80, has two tiers and a bench top to perch on while you tie your laces, and will take around eight pairs of shoes; johnlewis.com.



3 Customise
That old staple of storage solutions – the trusty fruit crate. You could hang around veg markets and look out for cheap used ones or buy a brand new one especially made for such a use and not very expensive. Use singly to pile pants or socks in, or screw into units of four or more to create cubby holes for jumpers and T-shirts. Paint and decorate according to whim. Used crates from vintageapplecrates.com start at £13.25 each, or buy these new ones, £5.75, at king-of-crates.com.



Hub Ladder Rack by Matt Carr, £80, umbra.com

HOME QUANDARIES

My teenage stepson lives with us part time – a set-up I enjoy very much, but with one reservation. He is the master of the 'floor drop', ie, the notion of hanging clothes up is totally alien to him, so they lie heaped on the floor mouldering away. I am loathe to tiptoe into his room when he's out, pick up his jeans and T-shirts and put them away in his wardrobe for him, but I can't bear to see them lying there. What to do?

Answer in brief: *make hanging up clothes cool*

The ways of the teenage boy are indeed mysterious. Whereas you take pleasure in rows of neatly hung jeans, to him that idea is beyond consideration. Clothes are to be worn, then discarded until they need washing (preferably by someone else). But it's good to encourage him to take responsibility. Try propping a vintage wooden ladder by his bedside (or buying a ready-made version, left) to drape his clothes on. It will take less effort than opening a wardrobe and finding a hanger, and may just persuade him to do it.