

# LET'S GET ORGANIZED

Boxes are not only a great way to sort accessories but they also add a design element to your closet

**HOMESENSE** WICKER BASKETS, \$5 TO \$13



You know you're about to have your best year ever, but did your closet get the memo? Our contributing style editor, *Ingrie Williams*, talks to fashion pros to get the dirt on how to tackle a closet cleanout. Here's her five-step guide to transforming an unruly wardrobe into your happy place and – this is the fun part – filling it with new things you'll love. | *photography by* LUIS ALBUQUERQUE

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## THE PREP

Wooden hangers can help preserve  
the shape of your clothes

HOMESENSE SHIRT HANGERS  
\$8 FOR PACK OF FIVE



**"JANUARY IS AN** amazing time to go through your wardrobe because there's all that energy and momentum for starting fresh," says Jenn Rogien, a spokesperson for Winners and costume designer for the hit TV shows *Girls* and *Orange Is the New Black*.

To transform that energy into action, commit to a specific date and time. This isn't the type of task that you can squeeze into any given day or rush to finish. "Start with a plan," says Christina McDowell, the Toronto-based founder of luxury resale bou-

tique Clementine's and an image consultant who has worked with celebs such as Liv Tyler and Aretha Franklin. "Pick a Sunday morning with no interruptions. Your goal is to have a completely edited closet by the end of the day."

Editing takes time and patience, as you'll be trying on everything you own. That's right: everything. "Don't discard things just by looking at them on the hanger; put them on and see if the proportions seem out of whack or if they don't fit you anymore," says Rogien. She likes to work with a

buddy to get another perspective. "It has to be someone who is going to give you an honest opinion, who will look at that piece and say 'You haven't worn that in years, so it's got to go.'"

When you're ready to dive in, McDowell advises focusing on one season at a time and having three piles: one for items to keep, one for those that need alterations and one for donations. Then take out everything, she says. "Sounds daunting, but it's worth it."

This is where a few deep breaths can help. The road to

closet euphoria can be paved with bumps in the shape of buyer's remorse or body image issues. But you're playing a long game here, so keep your eye on the prize: a group of items you like to wear so much that you actually wear them. "It's that balance of holding onto things that are still very much a part of your wardrobe, but you're not currently wearing because of seasonality or trend, and getting rid of those things that you truly don't want to wear anymore to make space for a couple of key pieces," says Rogien.

# 2

## THE EDIT

Organization can be fun when you find new ways to store things, like using a scarf hanger

HOMESENSE SCARF HANGER, \$8



**WITH YOUR CLOSEST** contents emptied, it's time to set some rules around what gains entry back in. Suzanne Timmins, senior vice-president and fashion director for Hudson's Bay Company, is among the many fashion experts who believe that if you haven't worn the item in two years, then it's time for it to go. "It's a very good rule," she says, "although there are special pieces that deserve to be archived if you have the space."

Rogien agrees, on both fronts. "I'm not talking about statement or vintage pieces; I mean those everyday blouses and trousers that, for whatever reason, you don't gravitate toward any more," she says. "It may be that the fit is feeling out of date or you don't want to wear that much pattern in your life anymore."

For Michelle Addison, a personal shopper and stylist from B.C., her emotional response plays a role, too: "If it doesn't make you happy, get rid of it. So many clients seem to hold onto things just because they paid a lot of money for them. If you don't like the way you feel in a certain item of clothing, then it is doing you no good."

With the ground rules set, you can start assessing items. Addison likes to work through each category separately but prefers to tackle trousers first. "Bodies change and people change," she says. "Sometimes getting rid of an old, dated pant can be life-altering." So can reworking a garment you've nearly given up on. Between the black and white process of tossing and keeping, alterations can open up a grey area of sunny potential. "I see if we can alter jackets to make them more current," says Addison, adding that she also keeps note of what needs to be replaced while cutting down on excess.

# 4

## THE ESSENTIALS

**A FABULOUS CLOSET** goes beyond the garments hanging in it. To create a space the pros would approve of, you'll need a few choice storage essentials to keep things tidy. "The trick is to have a place for everything," says Addison. "A belt drawer, scarf baskets, tie racks – all these compartments allow you to find what you are looking for quickly."

Hangers are crucial, and no one wants to have a *Mom-mie Dearest* moment. "Never use wire hangers," says McDowell. For the most part, high-functioning velvet hangers are the preferred choice.

"For everyday [use], I love velvet hangers – they are thin and slip-proof," says Timmins. "There is nothing worse than finding your favourite blouse trampled at the bottom of your closet! Jackets and coats must be on wider hangers to keep their shape."

Addison likes to invest in matched hanger sets as much as possible. "I take all mismatched hangers out and rehang everything on the same kind of hanger to create order," she says.

Boxes are another must-have – an easy way to contain everything from knits to handbags. The latter, Timmins notes, should be stored in a dark area and kept in duster bags to avoid scratching and discolouration. For less delicate extras, such as footwear, McDowell and Addison are fans of using clear plastic boxes.

# 3

## THE RESHUFFLE

**ONCE YOU'VE EDITED** all items, you're in the home stretch. Pat yourself on the back and resist the urge to toss everything back in. It's time to create a sense of order. Besides being a visual treat, this important step will set you up to make getting dressed easier and quicker.

"I like my closet organized by items: tops together, jeans together, athletic wear in one drawer, blazers all hung together," says Addison. "I find that this is extremely helpful when putting together an outfit." Timmins takes a similar approach, organizing her closet by season first, then by commodity, followed by colour. "Keep your favourite go-tos right up front: It makes time-sensitive days much easier to manoeuvre!" she says.

Rogien concurs with putting your preferred pieces within reach and also organizes her closet by category. "That's how we do it at work as well, so when I'm building a look [for a character], I know right where to go for the individual pieces." The most important criteria, she says, is to organize in a way that works for you. "If colour works, go with colour. If you're a dress person, put your dresses front and centre. Make it workable and easy."

LYNN SPENCE, SECOND FROM LEFT, CHALLENGED FRIENDS TO WEAR THE SAME DRESS THEIR WAY, PROVING WE ALL HAVE A STYLE AGE WORTH CELEBRATING. OLSEN OMBRÉ SNAKE PRINT DRESS, \$159

# 5 [ THE HIT LIST ]

**Fact:** The best part of a closet cleanout (besides the physical and emotional letting go) is that it gives you the go-ahead to shop for new duds. You know what you have; now it's time to get what you need. We asked our experts to name their must-have staples, as well as the seasonal updates they can't wait to wear this spring. Don't go shopping without them!



**STAPLE ITEM** A classic wool coat in grey, black, navy or camel. This is something that should stand the test of time. Nothing makes an entrance like a good coat.

**SEASONAL UPDATE** I am currently obsessed with anything Phoebe Philo does for Céline. She is embodying the spirit of today's woman. Wide-leg pants and floral blouses? Yes, please! **MICHELLE ADDISON**



**STAPLE ITEM** A little black dress, the perfect jacket, black pumps and a timeless bag

**SEASONAL UPDATE** I still like the laid-back '70s trend, which will continue into spring. **CHRISTINA MCDOWELL**



**STAPLE ITEM** A white cotton shirt is one of the most versatile items you can own. It can be dressed up or down – wear it with your favourite pair of jeans or a gorgeous silver sequined pencil skirt.

**SEASONAL UPDATE** There is romance in the air for spring '16! I have my eye on languid, lingerie-influenced romantic dresses, ruffled silks and lace. **SUZANNE TIMMINS**



**STAPLE ITEM** A non-blazer blazer. One of those things you could throw on that works for work but can also be worn when you're out playing. For me, it's a leather moto jacket.

**SEASONAL UPDATE** I get my seasonal style in my shoes. It's a quick update that can take a classic look in a new direction, and I can always find shoes that make me happy! **JENN ROGIE**



## THE OTHER SIDE OF 40?

### TAKE STOCK BEFORE YOU RESTOCK

**NOW THAT YOU'VE** purged, resist the urge to just go out and buy all the same stuff. As we age, it's important to reassess our style to discern what's still working and what needs to change.

According to style expert Lynn Spence, this is a journey that every woman should embrace. "We spend decades honing our personal style, but at some point we all have to re-evaluate. There are many factors that influence your style age, but the ultimate question is, who do you want to project?"

Spence, who has partnered with European-based sportswear brand Olsen, has compiled a list of top tips to help women navigate the maze of fashion musts and lusts. Here are some of our faves.

**Jean therapy** Skinny jeans don't have a cut-off age, but the way you wear them does. Tunics or dresses look great worn over a slim-silhouette bottom, which makes your skinny jeans a keeper. Alternatively, if that's not your style and you are in great shape but don't want to reveal too much when you lean over, opt for a higher-waist cut.

**Classics with a twist** If you feel you need to move in a more classic direction but are a fashion rebel at heart, incorporate one piece that stays true to your younger self. A motorcycle jacket can still work with a sophisticated black wool pant and simple sweater.

**Flower power** If you love floral patterns, feel free to keep them in your wardrobe, but you may want to go with larger patterns and prints – ditsy florals tend to skew very young.

**Tighty righty** If you think it's time to stop wearing tight, revealing clothes, then it probably is. If this is your signature look, try pairing one form-fitting piece with a looser-fit item to create balance.

**Trend report** If you love following the trends, do it! Just pare down the bells and whistles. If frills are all the rage this season, by all means wear them, but a blouse that has a simple frill at the neckline or cuffs may be preferable to layers of frills. *HR*