

# make over your closet

Visitors may not see what's behind your closet door but *you* have to dig through the cluttered space every day. Give yourself the simple pleasure of a well-ordered closet. *by Jennifer Jafarzadeh*



## what's wrong here

### ■ Zero visibility

This closet's overstuffed with clothes on a mishmash of hangers, so there's no clear sight line. And clothes hung up in dry cleaning bags are easy to forget about (plus, fabrics can't breathe inside the plastic).

### ■ The pile-high club

The stacks of sweaters, sweats, and who knows what else are about to cascade off the high shelves.

### ■ What a drag

Both sides of the closet are set up with a double-rod system—to maximize hanging space—but the bottom rods sit so low that shirt bottoms drag along the floor.



## solution

A custom-designed shelving system (this steel one is by Elfa from The Container Store).

### ■ Long hang:

Dresses, long skirts, and pants need extra vertical space. Hang pants long or fold them in half over a sturdy hanger and slot them in short-hang space. A canvas organizer pockets 10 pairs of shoes in front-and-center view. **Shown here:** 10-shelf hanging shoe bag, \$15; Cherrywood suit hanger with bar, \$5 for five: [bedbathandbeyond.com](http://bedbathandbeyond.com).

■ **Short hang:** The double hanging space now starts high enough so that clothes on the bottom rod don't drag along the floor. **Shown here:** Cherrywood suit hanger with clips, \$7 for five; Cherrywood trouser hanger with clamp, \$7 for set of six; Cherrywood shirt hanger, \$5 for six: [bedbathandbeyond.com](http://bedbathandbeyond.com).

■ **Shelves and drawers:** One wall of six shelves (plus a few low-mounted drawers on the other walls) makes it easy to see and grab folded items.

■ **Bins and boxes:** Colorful containers organize handbags and belts and keep loose winter gloves and hats within easy reach. Stash out-of-season clothes in boxes on topmost shelves. **Shown here:** Hatboxes, \$10–\$20; bins, \$20; Peekaboo boxes, \$20: Resource International, 888-927-9052.

"People make the mistake of creating a system in their closet before they even see what they have."

—Linda Rothschild, professional organizer and founder of Cross It Off Your List.



closet planner **work sheet**

Count out your wardrobe so you know how much long-hang, short-hang, and foldable stuff you have—that way you can really maximize space in your closet.

## women

| CLOTHING           | HOW MANY? | FOLD or HANG? |
|--------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Casual shirts      |           |               |
| Dress tops         |           |               |
| Sweatshirts/fleece |           |               |
| Suit jackets       |           |               |
| Casual jackets     |           |               |
| Dresses            |           |               |
| Long skirts        |           |               |
| Short skirts       |           |               |
| Dress pants        |           |               |
| Jeans              |           |               |
| Shorts             |           |               |
| T-shirts           |           |               |
| Bathing suits      |           |               |
| Summer wear        |           |               |
| Workout gear       |           |               |
| Pajamas            |           |               |
| Lingerie           |           |               |

## men

| CLOTHING           | HOW MANY? | FOLD or HANG? |
|--------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Sport jackets      |           |               |
| Suit jackets       |           |               |
| Button-down shirts |           |               |
| Sweaters           |           |               |
| Jeans              |           |               |
| Dress pants        |           |               |
| Khakis             |           |               |
| T-shirts           |           |               |
| Shorts             |           |               |
| Workout gear       |           |               |
| Summer wear        |           |               |

**FOLD or HANG?**

Sweaters, scarves, knit shirts, sweatshirts, and jeans all look better and last longer if you fold them, says professional organizer Jen M.R. Doman of [getit-together.com](http://getit-together.com).

## PLAN YOUR CLOSET

❶ **MEASURE:** Use a tape measure to take the width, depth, and height of your closet. Measure the doorway's width, too.

❷ **DESIGN:** After you've measured your closet and tallied your clothes, an in-store or online Elfa expert can design a system for your space and budget. (See "The Closet Pros," page 116, for alternative services.)

❸ **INSTALL:** First, remove your old shelving and hanging rods. Install the top track first by drilling mounting anchors and screws into the track's holes. Then you can put down the drill: With Elfa closets, the top track is the foundation for the entire system, which attaches with standards and hooks.

## hung up

Clear out the haphazard mix of wire, padded, plastic, and wood hangers in your closet and start fresh with a set of uniform ones so that clothes sit at the same level (which makes it easier to see what you have). "If you have limited closet space, wood hangers are not the most efficient," says Doman. Durable plastic ones take up two-thirds less space.



**Best Value:** Choose from a dozen colors of these plastic tubular hangers that you can buy in bulk (\$18.72 for case of 72; [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com)).



**Most Versatile:** Olka hangers do it all: The rounded shape won't pucker shoulders, hook ends hold delicate straps, and the smooth bar supports pants without creating a crease. Available in five colors (\$3 for three; [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com)).



**Best Heavyweight:** You need supersturdy hangers to support heavy coats. A large Euro hanger (\$5 each; [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com)) won't leave shoulder marks on a jacket (a thinner one would).



**Best Accessory:** Yes, you can also hang pants on the Olka hanger—just add these clips (\$3 for six; [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com)).