

dressed in a flash

Getting your kids ready for the day is less of a chore when you put them in charge of their clothing.

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Minimizing kid clothing chaos isn't about spending a fortune on new furniture or a custom closet. It's about getting your youngster to buy in. "Ask your kids how they want to set up things," professional organizer Kathy Jenkins says. Even very young kids can decide where they like to get dressed and whether they prefer their school clothes to hang on the right or left side of their closets. "The answers don't really matter, but your kid now has ownership in setting up the system," Jenkins says. "And if they help make the system, they can be accountable."

Before shopping for new organizers, Jenkins recommends doing a thorough evaluation of your child's current clothing and setting specific expectations. "Stop throwing your shirts on the floor" isn't a very effective rule, whereas "I expect to not see clothing on the floor when I come into your room to say good-night each night" is achievable and gives kids freedom to figure out their own methods for meeting the goal. Most critically, parents need to practice what they preach. "If you have stuff all over your bedroom floor, don't expect your kids to understand why you are insisting that their floor be clean," Jenkins says.

Evaluate clothing at the change of season or after a child has gone through a growth spurt. Involve kids in the process by having them pull out their favorites, which can then be placed on the shelf or rod that's easiest to access.



Kathy Jenkins is a Certified Professional Organizer, Certified Family Manager Coach, and founder of Come To Order.



1. Large picture labels or iconic rub-on decals, used here, allow children to put away and find their clothes even before they can read. **2.** Plastic expandable drawer dividers keep stacks of folded clothing from toppling. Labels in the bottom remind kids where each item belongs. **3.** A fun hamper—perhaps with a backboard—turns picking up clothes into a game. **4.** A peg rail hung outside the closet shows off the clothes for the day. A small tote corrals shoes, socks, and accessories.



5. Curtains pulled back by a ribbon make it easy for kids to grab what they need. **6.** A clear plastic tag (search “retail shelf tags” online) hangs easily from a wire closet component and can be changed quickly. **7.** A bin for each activity gathers all uniform necessities in one place. **8.** Underbed boxes hold seasonal items out of the way. Each label serves as an inventory, noting sizes, quantity, and next season’s needs. **9.** Rod dividers (these are homemade from cardstock) delineate what goes where. Other labeling strategies include listing days of the week or each child’s name in a shared closet. **10.** Adjustable closet systems allow for kids’ closets to change along with their sizes. **11.** Shelves and bars are easy to remove and rework.



Kids can also be helpful “damage detectives,” searching for stains and holes to be repaired. If your kids can’t make it through the entire process, have them try on at least one of every type of clothing so you have a sample size of what fits to then use as reference while you evaluate the rest of their wardrobe.

Supply kids with the right tools—shelves, rods, hangers, hooks, and a hamper—to keep edited wardrobes in good order. Reserve traditional dresser drawers for small staple items, such as underwear, socks, undershirts, tights, and PJs. Shift all other garments to a cubby-style bookcase or closet shelves. Reserve one or two hanging rods for your child’s nicest clothing; fold and stack the rest.

Invest in right-size, good-quality hangers. Child-size hangers are great for toddlers and preschoolers, but as kids grow you must upgrade to wider versions to keep garments from falling off. Slim, velvet-lined hangers are worth the investment because they minimize slipping and save space.

Hooks are easier than hangers for kids to manage their everyday clothes. Mount several inside or near a closet and dangle jeans and shirts. Be prepared to raise hooks as kids grow taller and their clothes get longer. “Life changes, so choose a system you can easily adjust,” Jenkins says.

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