

A waste of space . . . and £50,000

We're often told by Ikea how it's worth cutting back on clutter. Now, says Gabrielle Fagan, they've got the figures to prove it

LIVING with clutter is costing us dear - as well as making us miserable. Ikea say 77 per cent of us have a big problem with clutter, which contributes to wasting a whole room. Squandering that space but paying for it over the years on our mortgages costs us on average an eye-watering £54,290.

Research by another company, Junk clearance business Any Junk?, confirmed the 'wasted room' evidence and put it at only a slightly lower cost. It estimated that, on average, householders waste around £32,000 worth of space.

"It's only when you do the numbers that you realise quite what a waste of money hoard-

ing junk can be," says Jason Mohr, founder of Any Junk?.

"Given the current state of the housing market there's never been a better time to make the most of the space you have. In many instances, the square footage saved is the equivalent of a whole room which, given the small cost of clearing it out, makes a lot more sense than moving house.

TV property specialist Roger Southam says looking afresh at rooms is the first step.

"As a first step, don't automatically use rooms the way they've always been used," he says. "Think of them as blank spaces and work out which room types actually suit your family's needs, and if necessary turn a little-used dining room into a study or playroom, or a spare room into an office."



Simon Glanville, founder of storage solution company STORE, says retail therapy is to blame for our crowded homes.

"We're often overwhelmed by clutter because we have more possessions than ever due to our shopping addiction and yet our homes are around 40 per cent smaller than they were 80 years ago," he says.

"The biggest mistake people make is rushing out to buy a lot of storage without really considering what they need. They may ignore simple, cheap solutions like under-bed storage or boxes that can go in a loft.

"Also when they try to clear the clutter they jump into trying to do the whole house in one go - we call it zigzag decluttering. That's where they start in one room, find things that they think should go in other rooms and dump here, there and everywhere as they go along. And, before they know it, the whole house is in a mess. Eventually they give up the whole exercise and end up in a worse mess than when they started."

ONE ROOM AT A TIME

Glanville says the key is to only sort out one room at a time. Have four large boxes or bags ready before you start so you can easily sort out what you want to junk, recycle, move to another room, and an 'indecision' box. This stops clutter spreading as you sort.

Designer Sir Terence Conran also has a kill-the-clutter plan in his book, *Storage*.

"We've all got our clutter weaknesses - for some it's

➤ **SHELF LIFE** The Eifa décor dressing room, in solid birch or walnut, costs £1,999 from STORE - complete with a free design service to make it fit your space

clothing, for others paperwork," he says. "Recognise them and resolve to get on top of them. Sort through different categories of possessions at regular intervals. Weekly is not too often for newspapers, seasonally is generally adequate for adult clothes, whereas monthly is probably better for children in growing spurs."

WALK-IN CLOSETS

Even if you haven't got a movie star-sized collection of Manolos, a walk-in wardrobe could be a good investment and could improve domestic harmony.

Transform that room into a walk-in wardrobe with Eifa, a Swedish storage range, whose starter kits cost from around £51. It's sold at STORE.

Alternatively, Hammonds Contemporary Closets range includes a new floor-to-ceiling shoe rack to fit over 50 pairs of shoes. Its bedroom systems start from £2,500.

If that's out of budget, The Holding Company has a huge variety of storage solutions including a wooden extendable clothes rack on wheels, £180, and Diamond Drawer organisers to fit any drawer, £7 each.

Ikea's Komplement shoe or-

ganiser, £29, can fit inside a wardrobe and has shoe trees for up to 16 pairs of shoes.

Blanket boxes are invaluable for out of season clothes or accessories. Ikea's Vinstra high gloss, white, two-drawer chest, £199, is a winner, while Sofa Workshop's new blanket boxes come in a variety of fabrics and leathers and start from £59.

OTHER SOLUTIONS

"Make use of all available wall space with wall mounted shelving," Glanville says.

"If you're tight for space opt for a couple of large boxes as side tables instead of a coffee table. This will still give you somewhere for those drinks and handy storage."

STORE's giant faux leather cubes are £60 for two, and The Holding Company has stunning real leather chests, available in red, from £95.

Laura Ashley's Milton table, £700, incorporates an adjustable table top with deep storage, while Marks & Spencer has coffee tables with added storage space.

The Cotswold Company's imaginative range includes Towering Circular chests. A three-drawer column chest, £199, or an Ivory Farmhouse 10-drawer chest, £259, could clear the clutter from a hall.

Even little touches make the difference. A Peg rail, £30 from Cox & Cox, incorporating a blackboard labelled with the days of the week could help keep things organised.



➤ **MODULAR LIVING** Eifa décor living room shelving is available at STORE (aplaceforeverything.co.uk)