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# Storage solutions to suit your home

**MAKE the most of the space you have in your home with our clever storage ideas.**

**You could add thousands to the price of your home with a some simple de-cluttering devices**

**R**ELATIVES and in-laws smarting from the lack of invitations to stay with families could lay some blame at the door of celebrity Sarah Jessica Parker.

The luxurious walk-in dressing room featured in the film *Sex And The City*, in which the actress plays the part of Carrie Bradshaw, has inspired many of the nation's women to recreate a similar room.

Storage specialists say the demand to fit out such rooms has recently shot up as many women opt to transform their spare or box rooms into shrines for their clothes and shoes, rather than leaving them as only occasionally used rooms for guests.

While making the best use of the space with slick storage solutions might upset the mother-in-law, it's definitely a financially savvy move because new research reveals that allowing our clutter and possessions to litter our rooms costs us dearly.

In a survey of UK homes, *Ikea* found that 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 - in London up to a staggering £100,280.

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 hoarding 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.

"Even for those people still looking to sell and move, nothing is more likely to send out the wrong signal to a prospective buyer than an untidy, cluttered home."

It kicks off arguments to, with around 70 per cent of people admitting that too much clutter leads to tension.

If you want to restore domestic harmony by improving storage and tackling those rebel possessions, TV property specialist Roger Southam says looking afresh at rooms is the first step.

"Many people give up decluttering before they start, because they just look around and think they can't face the time involved in sorting things out, and have over the years got used to their own clutter," he says.

"If that's the case I advise them to step back and consider that every square inch of your home costs you money. If you're not using it, you're losing it - so every room should work for you.

"As a first step, don't automatically use rooms the way they've always been used. 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. Then get rid of the clutter by using smart storage and making better use of space."

**Clear the clutter**

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 - it's our national pastime - 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 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."

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 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, monthly, seasonally or yearly). Weekly is not too often for newspapers, seasonally is generally adequate for adult clothes, whereas monthly is probably better for children in growing spurts."

Conran says we should make use of the natural urge to turn a new leaf that comes in the spring and autumn.

"If you wake up in the mood to get to grips with your wardrobe or filing cabinet, act on it!"

Consider ditching (or recycling) any practical item, including clothing, that you haven't used or worn for over a year, any item that's been awaiting mending for more than a few months, and any possession that induces guilt. The latter can include never-used kitchen gadgets or equipment for hobbies that you've given up or never started.

The most common clutter culprits are old cosmetics and medicines; old paint, chemicals and insecticides; accessories and manuals relating to equipment which has been replaced. Anything not unpacked since you moved in.

#### Carrie closets

Even if you haven't got a movie star-sized collection of Manolos or Louboutin shoes, a walk-in wardrobe could be a good investment and could improve domestic harmony. A report by wine storage specialists Spiral Cellars claims that 74 per cent of people feel a disordered, cramped wardrobe triggers arguments.

Transform that room into a walk-in wardrobe with Elfa, a Swedish modular 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 organiser, £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 £519.

#### 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, cleverly incorporates an adjustable table top with deep storage beneath it, while Marks & Spencer has coffee tables with added storage space, and a brilliant selection of storage boxes. Dwell's range of contemporary furniture includes a free standing swivelling bookcase, £225, which could double as a room divider.

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

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