



The Garage – The Last Frontier

It had to happen. Once we knew that we were only steps – and products – away from the perfect closet, kitchen, bathroom organization, the garage had to follow. Isn't that where we shove all the excess that we banished from the inside of our houses? How many of us unconsciously consider our garages a "holding tank"?

I have a beloved friend, grandmother of 4, who still has her own children's baby furniture and toys stuffed high in every corner of her 2 car garage "just in case". Is this an emotional issue or what? Even trying to convince her that someone else's children could benefit from her largesse, doesn't allow her to part with the concrete evidence of her own happy parenting days. While this may be an extreme case of "holding on", it also illustrates the energy and hard physical work essential to freeing up our lives and our living or working spaces. The more you have saved, for whatever reason, the harder the job becomes to eliminate. We have all driven down streets where the garage can no longer hold the cars.

Mess causes stress. As mentioned in our previous article, it also results in lost time, efficiency, productivity and if we are really honest, it makes it very difficult to keep things clean. Piles of papers, stacks of old magazines, ancient stuffed animals, no matter how beloved, and toys and bedding, can also facilitate cozy homes for unwanted "guests".

Personally, I get very agitated when I start feeling that clutter is getting out of control. Changes of season, requiring shifts of clothes, garden and sports equipment, add even more pressure to already packed schedules, making many of us tense and irritable. The garage can no longer wait. It's even worse than two weeks of letters and bills piled on the kitchen counter and filing cabinets that look like a home intruder attack.

So, how to begin? More importantly, how do you change patterns of behavior so you don't end up in the same place next fall, and horror of horrors, the following spring? Experts are fond of saying that spending 10 minutes daily de-cluttering your space is good mental health. The current state of your garage is beyond that at this point. It may well require major surgery.

If this sounds like one of your clients or potential clients then, according to Barry Izsak from Arranging It All, here are nine steps to help them get organized:

Step One – Analyze your needs - Know how you want to use the garage before you start – parking your cars, overflow storage, a work room or all of the above.

Step Two – Create a garage inventory - Make a list of the major categories of what you plan to store in your garage.

Step Three – Make a garage layout - Plan your storage center areas to determine what goes where.

Step Four – Break your garage organizing task into small, manageable pieces – Don't plan on organizing the entire garage in one day or you will defeat yourself before you start. Be realistic with your expectations and select an appropriate task to complete in the amount of time you have to complete it.

Step Five - Perform a gross sort -- Reduce the volume of unwanted items quickly by making the simple and easy decisions first to eliminate as much stuff as you can--as fast as you can.

Step Six – Sorting and purging -- Group like things together to find out how much of a particular item you have and then purge the items you no longer need.

Step Seven – Choose the storage system that suits your needs – Keep in mind what you might already have in the house – chest of drawers, bookcases, filing cabinets, etc. that can be given new life in the garage. When purchasing a new system, ask yourself if the system is:

- sturdy and stable?
- durable and how much weight can it hold?
- water resistant and rustproof?
- adjustable?
- easy to assemble or install?
- easy to keep clean?

Step Eight – Organize and containerize - Replace items into the system you have chosen containerizing when appropriate and be sure to label the containers well.

Step Nine -- Maintain your system -- The best system in the world will not last if you don't stick to it, so maintain your system and make the necessary tweaks along the way so it works for you!

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