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The Space Race
15 streamlined storage ideas for every interior
THE SPACE RACE

Clearing away clutter into streamlined storage will help you make the most of your square metreage. Read on for advice on how to build it in and for tips on easy updates. Words Sarah Baldwin

From dead batteries and out-of-date currency to obsolete mobile phone chargers and useless cracker presents, we Brits are a nation of hoarders (if you haven’t seen comic Michael McIntyre’s sketch about the man drawer, check it out now on YouTube).

But whether it’s a case of hanging on to your hoardings, or simply having room for all your family’s necessities, well-planned storage is the key to a fuss-free, organised existence – regardless of whether you’re building a new home or are in the don’t-move-improve camp.

The key is not just to think about what you own right now, but also to consider what you may accrue in the future. Will you be working at home? Will you need extra space for growing kids? These factors need to be taken into consideration when working out your needs. Read on for some tricks to maximise storage in the design phase and for clever ways to gain extra space once in situ.
BUILD IT IN

Here are countless nooks and crannies in your home that can be used for storage with a little creative thinking. See, decide what you want to store and where — you only need easy access to the things you use regularly. Hire an architect if you’re unsure, who’ll suggest clever solutions. Architect Your Home (0800 849 850); architectyourhome.co.nz offers fixed-price design visits and can be commissioned on a pay-as-you-go basis.

THE STAIRS

An obvious place to build in storage is around your staircase. Consider making the structure itself into an open or closed storage. Mark Down from Excelsior Architects (020 8409 1969; excelsior.org.uk) recommends fitting drawers beneath the treads. To place of functionless vertical rooms, fit pull-out drawers that make great storage for shoes, he says. This is easiest if you’re working with a new feature, but can also be fitted once the staircase has been installed.

There are other options for adding storage to an existing staircase. If you have wide treads, consider installing a wall of shallow bookshelves you need between 15-20cm of depth for standard paperback books. Or organise the void under the stairs into compartments, commission a carpenter to come up with a bespoke design. Pull-out panels are the optimum in efficiency and Doris Furniture (020 8993 2866; doris.co.uk) produces a range of pull-out units that hold up to 200kg in weight and can be customised to include cupboards or larder-style shelving.

DEAD SPACE

Homes are packed with wasted space that can be transformed into storage. These include under stairs, around baths and doorframes. “The quality of the design of storage makes a huge difference in a small house,” says Sophie Goldhill of Liddicoat & Goldhill (020 7900 9977; liddicoatgoldhill.com). You saw their two-bedroom house a few months ago in CDW’s December issue; Goldhill and husband David Liddicoat designed storage into every available inch. The super-tiny downstairs WC — just 890mm wide — holds the washing machine in a cupboard behind the toilet. They also left out some bricks on the left-hand wall to make room for a sink and toilet roll holder.

STRUCTURAL SOLUTIONS

“The principal place that gets forgotten is in between stud walls,” says Down. There’s at least 10cm of depth in a stud wall, and it can easily be opened up and fitted with shallow shelves. Dyson recommends using a stud wall in the kitchen to store slim containers. In a bathroom, stud walls are usually about 20cm thick to allow for drainage, so a wooden cabinet is another space-saving solution. MDF is suitable for lining stud walls, but Dyson suggests using a solid laminate sheet such as Formica or blackboard for the shelves, as they’re more resistant to sagging.

Architect Chris Roxon-Lea at Studio One Ten (020 7633 0033; one10.co.uk) refurbished a Victorian home by exposing the frame to create space for a collection of design objects (picture above). “We stripped back layers of houses to expose the timber studs, which set out where the shelves would sit,” explains Roxon-Lea. He inserted grey-painted MDF boxes into the holes. “Their simple space means they do not take away from the grandeur of the structure,” he says. Roxon-Lea recommends always consulting an engineer for the kind of work you are working with; the bones of the building. Findahomeengineer.com will help you find a chartered structural engineer in your area. —

above: This dining table folds up to provide extra living space. The set in this modular lacquered MDF suite, by architect Bob Gregory of around £6,000, are stored underneath

right: Very short of space must see, architect Liddicoat and Goldhill used the void under the stairs, which holds on to the adjacent WC, to house the washing machine.
Not all shelving needs to be considered at project stage; there’s plenty you can do once you’ve moved in. There are essentially two approaches: make a feature of it or integrate it, so that it’s completely hidden. Think about what you are looking to store; sculptures and books look great on open shelves, while mismatched items and electrical goods are better off hidden away.

SECRET STASH
For fans of the minimalist aesthetic, handleless designs are an ideal and attractive solution. A bank of built-in and simple cupboards is an extremely effective way of concealing your clutter, media units or even a home office space.

'It should look like part of the room, as opposed to an item in its own right,' recommends Romer-Lee. He also suggests painting it to match the wall, so that it doesn’t stand out. ‘Opt for a dark interior like, say, a blood red, inside simple white cupboards. It can be really dramatic,’ Romer-Lee says. The depth of storage you decide on is critical – it needs to be a minimum of 60–65cm – and make sure you allow additional depth for services in a kitchen.

Paul McAnear Architects (020 7240 0500; paulmcaneary.com) recently refurbished this penthouse in London’s Victoria (above right). ‘Storage walls are one of the most important architectural elements within our projects,’ explains McAnear.

Here, the kitchen cupboards have chunky, wire-brushed and sand-blasted oak doors to match the rest of the scheme. ‘If your budget is tight we suggest a simple, multi-purpose solution made of economical carcasses for the interior, and high-quality lacquered handleless doors for the outer surface,’ says McAnear.

ON DISPLAY
Some things are worth showing off. A key advantage of open storage is that everything is accessible and easy to find. It works best if you select complimentary items; consider colour, shape and texture. Display shelves often become a sculptural feature in their own right, too. Architect Paulo Marto of

above left These cupboards by Slidershes (0800 454 465; slidershes.com) have white glass doors and dark wood vinyl wrap shelves. A similar look costs from £1,500 depending on dimensions and finish

above Designed by Paul McAnear Architects, this flat is divided up by timber boxes. Into these boxes, the team built banks of shelving, finished with doors made of the same material
Paul O Architects (020 7604 3818; paul-o-architects.com) designed this wall of black-stained oak bookshelves (below) in a new-build in Suffolk. 'The black bookcases filled with an assortment of books, photographs and objects form an ever-changing tableau and are mirrored on the other side of the room with double-height windows,' says Marta. The shelves, which cost around £1,000 per linear metre (£10,000), run across two levels, connecting the downstairs space to the gallery above.

Ready-made systems can be a more budget-friendly solution than a bespoke design. Ikea (0845 358 3363; ikea.com) is an obvious choice. Choose a modular system with adjustable shelves, so it can be adapted to suit your needs.

But there are plenty of high-end companies who can design fabulous storage walls on all scales. Vitsoe (020 7428 1606; vitsoe.com) is a go-to company for flexible, industrial-style systems. With tracks, shelves, cabinets and tables, the systems can be arranged to suit your individual needs - a bit like Meccano for adults. If you want truly flexible living, opt for a solution that includes both cupboards and display shelving. Other good brands that offer wall storage solutions include B&B Italia, Poliform and Molteni & C.