

Organizing Kids' Rooms: Eight Quick Tips for Moms

I always know that it's time to reorganize my home when I spend more than 20 minutes each day helping my kids to look for puzzle pieces or some other small object just so that they can continue their play. This morning, my son and I combed the carpet in the playroom and searched the toybox for the tiny helmet of his Lego policeman. When you have small children, it can be difficult to keep their things organized and to keep the clutter at bay. But an organized, clutter-free home helps everyone to feel more peaceful and relaxed. And it means you have to spend a lot less time searching for lost toys, too. Here are eight quick tips to help you to help your kids organize their stuff.

1. Get a sense of the big picture, and figure out what needs to be done first. Do a quick walk through of your home and determine where you need to start. And know at the start that this project isn't going to get done in a single day. It's best to get an overall view of the job as a whole and then choose the most pressing task first.
2. Don't go nuts buying containers and bins before you start. Before your job is done, you will likely need shelving and more than a few containers of various sizes, which you can find very inexpensively at discount stores. But don't purchase these things before you know what you'll need. I have wasted money in the past on needless storage bins (buying two or three, when one would do) or purchasing containers that were too big to be truly functional. Be patient and discover what you truly need. Then make a list and go to the store for these items just once.
3. Make sure your kids have the proper tools to keep their rooms tidy. If their laundry is all over the place, get them a nice clothes hamper that matches the decor of their room. Or put a golden star on their chore chart for taking their dirty clothes straight to the laundry room.
4. Put things away in logical containers. If there are too many of one item, break it down into yet another box. If you're really organized, you can create a color coding system to make things easier. Or tape a photograph of the bin's contents on the front. We have bins for Star Wars action figures and for Playmobil pirates, as well as separate bins for Playmobil knights and then another for cars and trucks.
5. As you go, you'll want to have two large plastic bags: one for charity and one for trash. I bag things right away because I find that, if I ask my kids whether they want to keep an item or give it away, they can make a decision right away, but if they continue to see that item, they are likely to change their minds. Once the decision is made, it's a lot easier for everyone if it goes out of sight.
6. Don't ask too much of yourself in a single day. For me, tackling my son's toys was one day's project and tackling my daughter's closet was another. If I try to do too much in a single day, I'm very likely to get in a hurry halfway through the second or third project, and I end up not being as thorough as I would like.
7. Explain to your kids the value of keeping their room organized. Children don't like to spend a lot of time looking for lost toys either. After you have organized things, make sure to emphasize the benefits of the tidy room each time they are able to successfully find their toys on the first try. You are teaching your children habits that will serve them well for their entire lives.
8. Know that this job is never truly finished. My son and I organized his room recently, meaning that we dumped out everything from his toy box to his storage shelves as well as all of the once-organized bins and started from scratch. No matter how organized you keep things, you'll probably need to do this from time to time. Now use the time you would have spent looking for lost toys in a different way: put your feet up and relax with a hot cup of tea.

About the Author

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