

## **Tidy Home: Living Room Organization Tips**

5 methods for keeping your living room a neat and livable space

By Tina Koenig

Living rooms are high-traffic areas in the home that can be a catch-all for everything. Keep mess and clutter from crowding you out. How can you reserve it for living?

To control clutter, start by sectioning your living room into different areas to suit activities specific to each area, from conversation to playing and reading to watching television. When making furniture and home accessory purchases, look for multipurpose, convertible pieces that perform more than one task, such as a coffee table with shelves or a fold-out computer workstation that can be tucked away when entertaining.

Follow these suggestions for a living room that's presentable, functional and comfortable:

### **Take Inventory**

Cast a critical eye over the different areas of the living room and the activities that take place in the space. Besides conversational seating, does one area act as the entertainment center? Is another for performing music, playing games, for homework, or a computer or perhaps there's a creative space for making art? Smart carts, storage on wheels, with or without drawers, make great use of vertical space. Keep items off the floor and move clutter out of sight as needed. The number three is key. An unsightly TV-stand can be covered with attractive fabric panels for hidden storage. Some decorators believe that any more than three items on a coffee table is clutter. As much as we love our belongings, it may be hard to put them away.

### **Shelf Yourself**

Shelves not only add visual interest to décor they resolve a variety of clutter quandaries. Adaptable and available in many prices and materials, shelving units can both store and display items. Decorative bookends let you add an architectural element and personality to shelving units. Align books vertically up to five or ten of similar thickness. Break up sections with family photographs or flowers. Spark conversations by including unique souvenirs collected while traveling. Pick and choose your knickknacks so they add personality, not clutter. If you have small children make sure that shelving is bolted to the wall for added stability. Shelving units with doors are a great way to hide away items and toys when not in use.

### **Contain the Mess**

Decorative accessories should be bold and hold. Small bowls, boxes and glassware with lids that close tightly are the organized person's friend. Decorative boxes are an

eye-catching way to store old photographs, articles, and sentimental items like children's trophies. Placing a hinged ornamental box on the coffee table or media center is a sensible way to keep track of remote controls for media and gaming. Old baskets used for picnics or to collect firewood may be re-purposed to hold magazines and newspapers. Remember, the best way to squeeze the most out of your space, whether large or small, is to consolidate belongings by selecting furniture, like an ottoman, that doubles as storage.

### **Toy Roundup**

A window seat with hidden storage is the perfect repository for children's board games and small toys. Sturdy baskets and stackable crates are an inexpensive way to gather up toys. When placing toys inside bins, organization experts suggest putting identifying photos on the outside of bins so children don't have to guess what's inside. As children grow, and toys change, you simply replace the pictures. One rule for dealing with large toys is not to let children's play-sets double as furniture. Bigger items should be moved to their bedroom, a playroom or closet when possible. Another rule is to remind children to take a few minutes every day to put their toys away.

### **Tame Wires**

Taking control of electrical wires can vastly improve the look of your space. Quick fixes include Velcro cord strips that wrap or cinch cable so you don't have piles of cord collecting dust on the floor. Some of the latest power strip designs are mini-housing systems that can fit a power strip and have brackets that let you coil cords after you've plugged in. The unit can then be hidden in a corner or under furniture.

If you put function first, the clutter won't follow.