

# Closet Audit

Professional closet designer Lisa Adams waxes poetic on the joys of closet organization and clutter-free living.

BY REBECCA J. RAZO

A closet to end all closets, this luxurious boutique wardrobe features custom boot trees, in-cabinet lighting, a pullout mirror, pullout belt trays, jewelry and accessory drawers, an integrated laundry center and a sleek, spiral clothing rack. A silver tufted ottoman and crystal chandelier channel Old Hollywood glamour and romance.



This his and hers dual-purpose closet is functional, artistic and green. Its materials include low-VOC paint, sustainably harvested mahogany wood, basalt-honed shelves, bamboo flooring and low-wattage track lighting. Neatly contained clothing racks, pullout racks and abundant shelves offer plenty of storage and help keep the space organized and uncluttered.

"CLOSETS ARE MORE THAN JUST A SPACE TO STORE BELONGINGS," says professional closet designer Lisa Adams, of Lisa Adams Closet Design in Los Angeles. "They should be treated with the same importance as any other room in the house." If you've ever fumbled around your closet on a weekday morning desperately trying to throw an outfit together (and silently cursing yourself for not just cleaning the darn thing), you probably recognize the undeniable truth in Lisa's statement. In fact, it's the very reason she got into closet design in the first place.

After graduating with an MBA, Lisa's plan was to find a career in the sciences where she could put her business acumen to work. In what she believed was a temporary detour, Lisa went to work for a kitchen and bath design firm. "I saw the rise of kitchen spaces—how it was becoming the hub of the home and how people were seeing the value of the space," says Lisa. "It made me realize how neglected closet spaces were—a true dichotomy where people wanted nice closets but settled for a poorly designed shelf-and-pole setup...I knew it was my calling." Lisa started a closet division for the firm, which eventually gave way to creating her own business.

## From Chaos to Control

Does the thought of cleaning your closet—or bedroom for that matter—make you want to pack up and move? Don't fret—the tasks aren't as daunting as you might think!

"Getting rid of your clutter does not have to be a chore if you work on it gradually," says Lisa Adams, who suggests "organizing one room at a time." If that task still feels unmanageable, Lisa recommends organizing one section of a single room at a time. "Think baby steps," she says, noting that once one section is cleared, you can move to the next section and so forth until the room is completed.

"Here is my golden rule: Every time you bring something new into the house, something old needs to go. Most people do not keep this balance in their home; hence, the towering piles of toys and clothes add up over time to create an overwhelming mess. Create a donation bin, and make this a weekly event. If you work little purges into your normal cleaning routine, it will become second nature instead of a dreaded chore. Once you embrace the process, it is very therapeutic. By getting rid of the unhealthy clutter, you save emotional stress, time and money."



"It was my mission to create well-designed closet spaces, both functionally and aesthetically—multipurpose and multifunctional living spaces."

As much as one might want to turn their closet into a living space, however, Lisa concedes that it can be difficult for people to know where to start. To help them, she asks her clients a lot of questions. "I ask about their lifestyle, their preferences, how they want to flow through the closet," Lisa says. "Do they want a shopping experience in their closet? Do they want to create a boutique? How do they dress in the morning? Do they share their closet with a mate and need a separation of space?"

These questions—and then some—not only help Lisa design the perfect closet for her clients, but also help homeowners connect to what they feel is important in this intimate, personal space. "With a well-designed closet, you feel organized and empowered," she says.

For more information about Lisa Adams, visit [laclosetdesign.com](http://laclosetdesign.com). <sup>RH</sup>

"Utilizing natural light allows this space to be livable while highly functional," Lisa says. Design elements include a rotating clothing carousel, pullout laundry basket with liners for laundry and dry cleaning and pullout trays, shelves, pant rack and shoe shelves. Cubby space on top accommodates stylish storage boxes and suitcases.



**Above:** This beautifully contained closet design combines sophistication with function. A wall treatment in Damask by Farrow & Ball combined with a decorative bronze-framed antique mirror, off-white cabinetry with crystal knobs and glass-paneled doors add to the elegance, while such amenities as jewelry inserts, angled shoe shelves, boot trees and ample drawer and shelf space make accommodating clothing and accessories a breeze.

**Above right:** This light, bright closet features an island with multiple drawers and pullout trays, as well as a rotating shoe carousel, stacked clothing racks and lots of open shelf space.



## Closet 4-1-1

Closet in need of a makeover? Check out these budget-friendly DIY closet organization resources.

**John Louis Home:** (314) 344-8927 or [johnlouishome.com](http://johnlouishome.com)

**Easy Closets:** (800) 910-0129 or [easyclosets.com](http://easyclosets.com)

**ClosetMaid:** (800) 874-0008 or [closetmaid.com](http://closetmaid.com)

**Rev-A-Shelf Accessories:** (800) 626-1126 or [rev-a-shelf.com](http://rev-a-shelf.com)

# 10 Steps to a Clutter-Free Closet

Professional closet designer Lisa Adams reveals her secrets of success for closet management and organization.

- **Organize in sections.** Create groupings for each type of item. For example, informal wear, formal wear, shoes, accessories, etc. Then organize each section in a chronological manner based on the way you get ready in the morning. Undergarments would come first, followed by tops, then bottoms, and then shoes and accessories. "This system can save a lot of time each morning when getting dressed," says Lisa.
- **Replace your hangers.** Remember *Mommie Dearest*: "No wire hangers ever"? Lisa too suggests replacing old, flimsy hangers with high-quality, matching hangers, which are better for protecting your clothing and "instantly give your closet a face-lift!" Lisa says.
- **Create a system for items on hangers and in drawers.** Lisa suggests developing an organization system based on color, brand, fabrics, cuts or anything else that works for you. Drawer dividers and pullout shelves can help keep like items grouped together.
- **Use pullout shelves for easy access.** Pullout shelves are ideal for deep, narrow spaces and make clothing visible and easy to locate. Says Lisa, "After all, what you don't see, you will likely never wear."
- **Compartmentalize small items.** Smaller items, such as belts, ties and jewelry are easily lost in a mismanaged closet. A variety of closet-organization resources make it easy to organize, view and store items. Colorful plastic bins or baskets will also do the trick.
- **Invest in pull-down swing rods.** Closets with unreachable vertical height may seem like a waste of space, but pull-down swing rods can be mounted higher than traditional rods and then pulled down to eye level instantly. "This way," says Lisa, "you can maximize the vertical height by creating more accessible drawer and shelving space below."
- **Organize shoes.** Group shoes together by type: athletic, casual, flats, heels, boots, etc. Footwear that is not worn frequently, such as formal shoes or winter-weather boots, can be stored in plastic bins on a high shelf.
- **Designate an area for dirty laundry.** Pullout or free-standing laundry baskets in the closet can prevent garments from landing on a chair, the floor or under the bed.
- **Include a landing table,** if possible, which allows for ease of packing, as well as folding garments.
- **Take inventory.** Take a moment to go through each item in your closet. "Ask yourself if the garment fits and flatters or whether you have worn it in the last six months," says Lisa. "If the answer is no in either instance, the item should be donated or recycled."