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Top organizing tips for dorm rooms

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Planning ahead will simplify the transition to college dorm life.

As summer comes to an end, many of my clients are getting ready to send their child off to college. I wanted to share some of my favorite dorm room tips - ones that you might not find in a book. These tips not only come from my years of experience as a professional organizer, but also from my personal experience as a mom of three - two college graduates (girls) and one currently attending college (boy).

If you are like me, as my college-bound child was heading off to school, I read through every list of "must haves" and "must knows" for a college dorm room. The list seemed overwhelming, endless, and costly! One list had over 50 "best ideas." Really?! I learned to stick to the basics - dorm rooms are small and you have to move everything again in the summer - and anything else they needed could be added later.

Here are the key items to know that I found were the most useful and efficient:

1) Pack less clothing than you think you will need. If your child has four huge suitcases of clothing and is still packing ... they have over-packed! They will be quickly acquiring college logo T-shirts, sweatshirts and swag (guess what your holiday gift will be this year?), so make sure you have planned space for the new items. Most likely, you will be visiting your child on "Parents Day" (usually October) and you can easily bring (or send) more items to them. By then, they have a better sense of what they will be needing.

Dorm rooms are small. Don't try to take all of your clothes.

2) Raise the bed to create more space. Depending on the bed design and dorm rules, you can raise the bed high enough to put a desk underneath, or to make room for a refrigerator or rolling storage bins. Find out what your options are before move-in day.

Tip: Bring your own tools and risers - you will look like you know what you are doing and everyone else will be borrowing your tools! Create additional storage space under the bed with bed risers.

3) You can preorder items for pickup. Many stores (including The Container Store and Bed Bath and Beyond) will have a dorm items check-list with the option for you to purchase items in-store locally or online and then pick them up at a location near campus. The items will be ready at the store when you arrive and you can return any items you don't need. This saves tons of time and money as you do not have to pack it. Bedding alone can take up two suitcases.

4) Only bring decor and mementos that can be hung on a wall. Dorm rooms are tiny and may only have a bed, desk and a closet. You do not want to clutter the desk. Clutter can be very distracting to a student who is trying to focus on school work (once they figure out which parties to go to). Also, they will need room on their desks for all of their books and supplies. Tip: Be sure to check with dorm rules for decorating walls - removable hooks and mounting strips may come in handy.

5) Purchase a small trash can that HAS A LID. Your student will save themselves from a fruit fly infestation from the food they will throw in there. Most likely your student will not realize until at least for four months of living there that no one will be coming to empty the trash for them. Wait ... WHAT?!

6) Bring cleaning supplies. Trust me on this, you will want to clean the entire room before moving in. I recommend a small hand broom and dustpan along with a roll of paper towels and a bottle of all-purpose cleaner (you may need to show your student how to use this product if you have been cleaning their room since birth). Again, your student may be confused when they realize that no one will be cleaning their room for them.

7) Maximize closet space. New college students and parents are often shocked by the limited space in dorm rooms. I've listed a few of my space saving products. Tip: These work for your home spaces too. Most of these products can be found at The Container Store, Bed Bath and Beyond or good old Amazon.

Maximize closet space with a double hanging rod expander.

- Double hang rods: If your child knows how to hang up their clothes (this is a possibility), use a rod expander to double the hanging space. It installs in minutes and hangs from the upper rod.
- Hanging clothes and shoe organizers: These items help create shelf space in any closet. Always think of the vertical space as you will be very limited on the floor space.
- Stacking Drawers: Add a drawer unit or stacking storage drawers on the floor of the closet for more vertical storage (these can be used in place of a dresser).
- Hanging Accessory Organizers: You can purchase accessory organizers in many shapes and sizes that hang on the back of a door or inside the closet on a hanger. These are handy for smaller items such as sunglasses, keys, hats, etc.
- Tier Swing-Arm Pant Hanger: This hanger can hold up to 4 or more pairs of pants if you double up. Each of the swiveling arms allows easy access to your clothes.
- 6-Tier Shirt Tree: Get even more mileage from limited closet space with this hanger! It holds six garments in the space normally occupied by one.

8) Plan ahead. Find as much as you can about the new dorm living space before the move - size, furniture in the room, storage/closet space, size of the bed, dorm room rules, etc. - and have a plan. Remember, organizing is hard with a plan, it's almost impossible without one.



Source: The Container Store



Professional Organizer, Jennifer Raftis, CPOr founded Efficiency Matters, LLC to help you with all of your organizing needs for your home and business. She is a Certified Professional Organizer and an active board member with NAPO, National Association of Productivity and Organizing Professionals. She is also an independent representative for The Container Store and has expertise in designing closets, garages, pantries, playrooms and more. In addition, she is a Corporate Organizing and Productivity Consultant and has worked with Fortune 500 companies across the U.S. Another large part of her business is move management especially working with seniors who are downsizing. She and her husband have lived in Moraga for 30 years, raising 3 kids and working countless volunteer hours with many local non-profit organizations and schools. Jennifer@efficiencymattersllc.com, 925-698-3756 www.efficiencymattersllc.com

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