

real solutions

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Real Solutions is a periodic newsletter produced by Susan Stewart designed to provide practical organization tips to simplify your life.

Spring Cleaning: Mission Garage Organization

Spring is here and the garage door is open. This is a scary thought for Cindy. Her garage is so stuffed that she can't even park her cars in there. But the kids are wanting to get their spring toys out now that the weather is nice. As she begins moving piles of clutter from one place to another to unearth Nicole's bike, 3 year old Megan is having a hey-day in the piles of stuff on the garage floor. Eager to get on her old bike, Nicole starts digging through piles trying to find her bike helmet. Her search is unsuccessful and she begins whining about riding without it. Overwhelmed with the chaos and frustrated with the whining, Cindy loads all 3 kids in the car to go purchase a new helmet for Nicole.

The next weekend Mike is forced to tackle the "honey-do-list" because Cindy's extended family is coming over to celebrate Easter. Yes, it is finally time to get that entryway painted. Now where did he put those paint rollers and trays anyway? After digging around in the garage for 20 minutes trying to find the paint supplies, Mike heads out to the store to buy all new things. Meanwhile, the kids are wanting to hide eggs and are asking Cindy for their Easter baskets. She knows they are in the garage somewhere but the thought of digging through the chaos is too daunting. Next time they are out, she'll just buy new ones, again.

Mike and Cindy's scenario is all too common in busy families today. With careful planning and organization, you can save time, money and, most of all, your sanity. Read on to see how cleaning out that garage can make life easier.



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It is the beginning of March, time for Tracy to get out her spring decorations for her home. She goes into her garage and gets out the tub labeled "spring decorations" from the garage cabinet. Inside, she not only finds the decorations for her home but her children's Easter baskets and leftover supplies like egg decorating kits and plastic eggs as well. The kids will be excited to play with their Easter baskets for the next couple of weeks.

Later in the week, Tracy begins planning their once-a-year family work day for the garage. She gets

the children involved by allowing them to make signs to hang around the house detailing the time, date and goals of family work day. She also lets them pick out their own colored stickers to label their individual items for sale at their future garage sale.

Tracy and Kevin move the cars out of the garage and lay out several blankets on the driveway. Each blanket is designated "sell", "toss", "keep" and "move to another location." Every year the family goes through everything in the garage evaluating if it is still needed and making sure it has a home. Allowing the children to have a say in where items are "housed" gives them more incentive to keep things in their place. They also work together to sweep, mop and maintain various areas of the garage. A spot is made to store the items designated for the garage sale which will take place in a couple of weeks. After a hard day's work, the Tells celebrate by eating at a favorite restaurant and going out for ice cream.

real solutions for real life

- Make a list of all the problem areas in the garage.
- Try to figure out why the problem exists (ie The bikes and [sports](#) equipment are sprawled all over because there is not a place for them to hang or [park](#)).
- [Plan](#) a family work day to work on the garage together. Allow children to be involved in the decisions of where things should go and what things need to be kept.
- Use a peg board, garage [grid](#) or [hooks](#) to get tools and other items off the floor.
- Keep like items together. (ie All holiday [decorations](#) go in [clear](#) tubs together and all painting and maintenance supplies are together in a [tub](#) or on a shelf).
- Consider shelving or [cabinets](#) to store tubs of holiday decorations, seasonal toys, car washing supplies and other items.
- Look into [overhead](#) storage for storing bigger items such as camping equipment and luggage.
- If you own several large items like lawn mowers, wheel barrows and trimmers, a storage [shed](#) may be a good idea.
- Bike [racks](#) or hooks are a good place for storing bikes. Be sure to place a hook nearby to hang the helmet.
- Covering the floor with an epoxy coating or floor [cover](#) helps keep things cleaner in the garage.
- Have a garage sale or donate to charity all items that haven't been used in the last year.
- Help motivate kids to "let go" of outgrown toys and clothes by allowing them to keep the money made on their personal items at your garage sale.
- Don't forget to empty out the garage and sort through items at least once a year to maintain a clean and organized garage.

For more organizing tips go to www.perfectlyplaced.org

