

# DECLUTTER YOUR KIDS' ROOMS NOW

It's time to organise and declutter. **MH** speaks to the experts who know how to get things done. ■ WORDS JOANNA ONG

**H**ave kids and be organised? It's almost an impossibility. Especially when they are young.

Some parents just chill and let go and some can't even stand to see a toy out of place. For those somewhere in between, here are some tips to help the 'organiser' in you get going.

## What do I need to Prepare Before Starting to Organise and Declutter the Room?

Nathalie Ricaud, a professional organiser from Get Organised & Beyond gives a few pointers for you to consider:

## Decide whether and how much to involve your child in the organising process

If you don't want to involve her because she's too young, ask her which are her five favourite toys or her five favourite clothes that you shouldn't



be discarding. Children have a good memory and you certainly don't want to make them feel resentful towards you because you got rid of something that was precious to them.

### Plan your time

Decide whether you are going to tackle this project at one go or whether you are going to break it down into smaller and more manageable tasks for you. You could decide for example to declutter clothes, books, toys, schoolwork, artwork etc. on separate days.

### Decide what you are going to do with things you aren't going to keep

Are you going to toss them, keep them as hand-me-downs for a younger sibling or the next baby, donate, give away or sell? Having clarity on your disposal options can motivate you to get rid of more – whether it's the knowledge that they won't end up in a landfill, that they'll have a second life or that you'll make money out of them.

### Gather organising aids

Get large baskets or containers to sort things out and sturdy garbage bags for items to be disposed of. Also, some cleaning products if it's been a while since you last cleaned the closets.

It will be good to know what you plan to have in the room and plan the layout in advance, advises Kris Tan, organising expert from The Declutter Company Singapore. Setting a budget for the organising storage tools is the first step. One way is to look at what you have and then decide what else you need to add to. Reviewing ideas from the internet is also a perfect way to fast track your planning.

### Where do I Start?

Esther Tan, sales leader for Children's IKEA, says that one of the biggest misconceptions is that there is only

one fixed way to get organised and that the solution to organising and decluttering is buying lots of storage boxes, a large storage unit or throwing a lot of items out. In fact, you should be able to find the right kind of organisational tools and storage solutions which are adapted to your everyday needs, preferences and living situation at home. Some key considerations should be: What is going to be stored and how often will it be used? A well-planned activity flow is always the first step to help you organise according to your needs.

Kris agrees that there is no fixed rule in organising and decluttering. Just start with what is easiest for you and your child. She adds that you could start by writing labels on what you have. These labels will be temporary. Once the room is set, you can redo the labels. Categorise the items such as toys, books, puzzles, crayons etc.

Nathalie advises that you could start with the category that's the less sentimental for you (or your child), otherwise you may struggle to let go, feel discouraged and not complete the process.

**Have clarity on what you're trying to achieve. Envision how the room will look like once it's organised. That'll help you get started and keep you motivated during the organising process.**



Don't forget to take stock of the situation - especially what's working, what's not and what could be the root cause of problems e.g. too much stuff, inefficient storage systems, lack of processes etc. That'll help you define a solution that's workable for you and your child.

### What are Some Strategies to Calm the Clutter and Bring Order to the Kids' Rooms?

Nathalie shares some approaches that she uses with her clients:

**Gather all the items** you're planning to store in your child's room into her room as her belongings are likely to be scattered all around your home.

**Sort the items in categories.** For example, if you're tackling the toys, categories could be building blocks, board and card games, figurines, dolls, train sets etc. For clothes, it could be by type (shorts, T-shirts, pants, dresses etc.) or occasion (school uniforms, home, outdoors, smart etc.).

**Purge by category.** It's critical to do the purging by category because it's only when you look at a category as a whole that you can appreciate how much you have in this category and decide how much you should keep. Keep only what the child uses, needs and loves, and what can fit in the storage space.

**Assign a home.** Each and every item needs to have a dedicated home so that the child knows where to find it and where to put it away. Keep things she frequently uses easily accessible. If you want your child to dress up independently, make sure she can easily reach her clothes. Make sure bulky and heavy toys are kept on lower shelves so that it doesn't become a hazard when she wants to reach them. On the other hand, you may want to



keep jigsaw puzzles on higher shelves so that younger siblings don't end up mixing the pieces.

**Containerise.** Use boxes, baskets and containers to keep the category of small items together so that she can find things easily. It also helps to set a limit of how much to keep in the category. If the container is full, then she'll have to let go of an item in the container to make room for a new one.

**Label the container** so that you and your child know the contents of each container. If the child can't read yet, label the container with a picture or a drawing of its contents.

**Fine-tune.** It's not always possible to get the organising right the first time. In fact, there's quite a lot of trying and failing involved in organising. Don't let

this discourage you. Make adjustments as long as needed until it really works for you and your child.

### Any Space Saving Tips to Maximise Space in the Room?

Esther recommends to opt for multi-taskers such as furniture with built-in storage, so there's a well-hidden space to store away your items even whilst you use them, e.g. bed with hidden storage. Consider a loft bed combination as it provides room for sleeping, studying, storing, playing and chilling. Keep storage units low so that kids can reach and organise their things easily, and be encouraged to tidy up independently too. Alternatively buy large clear plastic containers with wheels (for ease of retrieval) and lids (to protect from dust) to store less frequently used items, Nathalie mentions.

Nathalie adds that you could make use of the walls or the back of a door. Install wall-mounted shelves to display books or artwork. Hang pocket organisers behind the door to hold categories of small items. You could also fit an extra rod in the wardrobe to create extra hanging space and make it easier for your children to access their clothes.

Finally, Esther reminds parents to always think of your child's safety when organising by minimising hazards. Create a safe environment your child can explore and grow in by ensuring that the furniture and toys are made with zero tolerance on chemicals, and have rounded corners and no sharp edges. All standing furniture should be fixed to the wall to prevent it from tipping over and the furniture should be durable enough to handle the rough and tumble of everyday play. [▣](#)