



May Magic

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Organizing Your Laundry Room

Laundry rooms are an easy target for chaos and clutter. Take charge by using these three simple steps:

- 1) **Sort** – Go through what's inside your cluttered laundry room and start pulling things out – including dirty laundry. Be sure to have three things ready: a donation box, a garbage bag and a recycling bin. Start putting likes with likes: put clothes you are going to keep in one pile, if you have bottles of detergent that are still partially full put those in another area.
- 2) **Purge** – Toss, toss, and toss! Throw away bottles of detergent that have barely anything left. If you find things you haven't been seen in years, such as an old stinky mops, and an unused box of Dryell, toss these too. When you're finished purging take your garbage to the curb so you don't change your mind
- 3) **Organize** – Take what you have decided to keep and determine a) if you have the tools you need to keep it organized, such as bins/baskets, b) where you want to put these bins/baskets, and then c) measure your space and go purchase supplies at <http://tinyurl.com/286pr8>

Suggested organizing tools:

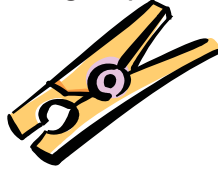
- Drying rack (purchase hooks or use nails so you can hang it on the wall when you don't use it)
- Trash can

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Various Valuable Laundry Tips

For laundry longevity, sort laundry into four groups:

1. darks
2. lights
3. delicates
4. dry clean only



Keep laundry bins in every bedroom, especially your child's room. Make a game out of teaching children to put their laundry into the basket by giving them a gold star each week when they do so.

Terrific Tip: A larger bin for kids is always better as socks, shirts and jeans have a better chance of actually making it into the basket!

Use a special bag for dry cleaning only and hang it in your clothes closet, so you'll remember to take it with you the next day to drop off at the cleaners.

Take items out of dryer and hang them up right away to avoid wrinkles and more ironing.

Terrific Tip: Have each family member pick his or her favorite color hanger and keep the clothes organized by hanger color.

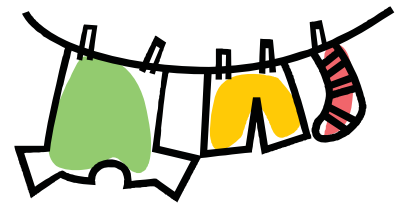
Be sure to allot time for laundry. I suggest picking one day a week to do it all, if this doesn't sound doable, you can select days for each person's laundry.

Keep a tiny garbage can near the dryer as a visual reminder to always empty the lint from the trap <http://tinyurl.com/32a93h>.

To avoid wrinkles, take clothes immediately from the dryer and hang or fold and put away.

Terrific Tip: If you forget to take the clothes out of the dryer immediately they will wrinkle. To fix this, place a semi-wet rag into the dryer and set it to fluff; this should take most of the wrinkles out.

Terrific Tip: If you leave the wash in the washer overnight, or longer, dry them and then re-wash it again to get the musty smell out of the cloths. The other time saving tip is to wash them with a capful of white vinegar and detergent and dry them as usual.



LAUNDRY SPACE

Get ready to move anything that doesn't belong in the laundry room, for example your tools.

Sort what does belong into categories, and place into bins, like laundry detergent, fabric softener, stain remover, delicates wash. If you decide to install shelving or cupboards be sure to measure the tallest bottle to make sure it will fit.

If you buy from Costco, be sure you have enough room for all of your extra supplies. If you don't have the storage space don't purchase bulk items; you aren't saving any money or space if you have to throw things away because you have no room.

Other items appropriate for the laundry room:

- Cleaning supplies – keep in a caddy with a handle for easy toting
- Cloth rags – keep in a bin
- Dog rags – keep in a bin, and wash after every use!
- Mops, brooms – hang a utility rack <http://tinyurl.com/2joxbk> on wall to keep them up off the floor
- Iron and ironing board – find an ironing board that can fold onto wall (<http://tinyurl.com/24b47g>) that also holds the iron on it – you can fold it up when it is not in use, very handy!



DAD'S BIRTHDAY

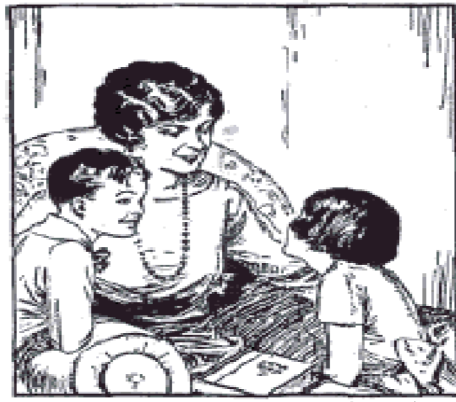
what to get someone who
doesn't need more stuff!

My dad's 80th birthday was May 2nd and I got to thinking about what to get him. He doesn't want or need much. I've learned so much from my dad; in fact I learned most of my organizational habits from him. He didn't hang onto a lot growing up, and when we got him "stuff" for birthdays and holidays he stuck it into a drawer never to be seen again. Most of us caught on and started getting him "recyclable gifts," like books, movies, and food. My favorite gift to send him over the holidays was chocolate covered cherries. This year, I decided to do something a little different; I sent him a loaf of his mother's famous nut bread – one of his favorite desserts, and something I can actually make!

Examples of what you can do for someone you love, when you don't want to add to their clutter.

- A basket of their favorite foods
- A bottle of wine or their favorite scotch
- A gift certificate to a favorite haunt (coffee shop, movie theatre, opera, or a department store)
- Your time: tea for two, dinner together, help de-cluttering their closet, or organizing taxes
- Help putting photos into an album
- Sitting together while he brags about a trip and shows off pictures

While buying gifts for people is a lot of fun, sometimes they just don't want or need another darned thing. Instead, give them some time or something that they would never treat themselves to, or have the energy to do themselves – like baking a nut bread!



Mother's Day Tribute

An Interview with a Generation of Mothers –1940-Present

The other day I was thinking about my mother, about how amazing she was at running our household, and the tools she taught me to use as an adult. I decided to do these interviews of two mothers and daughters because I wanted to honor mothers everywhere for Mother's Day. I could not think of a better way to do this than to write down examples of what we learn from our mothers such as how they managed our lives as we were young. In the four interviews I did, I was struck by the strength and courage of the mothers and daughters that I spoke with. I found striking similarities between the mothers and daughters in their life choices, and the systems that they set up; and I hope you enjoy these stories as much as I did.

Generation 1940 -1965 – Eleanor, daughter speaking/writing for her mother Sophia who has mild dementia

My mom didn't drive in early days of our childhood. Eventually in 1963 she got her driver's license and took us around to our activities. In our early years we didn't do much outside of the home for "extracurricular activities" (the piano teacher came to house, as did the violin teacher). My sister and I played with friends, took ballet class, piano lessons and violin lessons, while my brother played football and other games outside with friends.

Later, in approximately 1963, we kids walked to classes, took public transportation, or a late activities bus. My mom was a stay at home mom, so she managed the household without leaving the house via car. Even though my mom didn't work outside the home, there wasn't a lot of organization in our household. Everything was a routine as far as weekly classes, so she really didn't have to keep a schedule for us. She walked to the grocery store and used one of those [metal] carts that people still use for your grocery bags. The grocery list was on a piece of paper on the refrigerator, and she added what was needed as things came up. She went grocery shopping weekly, and she made supper every night, but it wasn't extravagant meals. I can't remember if she did this while toting 3 kids, or if she grocery shopped while my grandmother (her mother) watched us. We bought our lunches every week through the school. Before she had her license dad did a lot of the driving, even though he worked part time, this worked because it was after school. She taught us to make our beds, but didn't sort the silverware drawer. She ironed the sheets, and taught us how to iron by saying simply "you iron out the wrinkles."

Generation 1975 – 1998 – Eleanor, mother of three

I worked part time in the mid-70s and then went back to school for my PhD in the mid-1990s. The children's dad worked full time, sometimes late into the evening as he was in the research field. My eldest son played trombone, was in the Science Olympiad, took speech and debate (travel), and Tae Kwan Do. My middle child took acting classes, piano lessons, singing lessons, and was also in Science Olympiad. My youngest took piano lessons and played basketball.

Obviously our house was chaotic at best, so I had to take control the best way I knew how. I made a public schedule/calendar located on the refrigerator for the whole family to see. Before I went back to school, my husband and I also took turns carpooling, but I did most of it. I delegated chores and carpooling (to other moms and my husband when he went back to school). It was really helpful to have close friends with kids that I could swap carpooling with, especially when I was in graduate school. I had to be diligent with keeping up on with the carpooling schedule to avoid mishaps, which did occur from time to time.

I didn't create a [chore] list per say, this was just what I asked them to do and they did it for the most part. I asked them to make their bed every day, and empty the dishwasher and fill it, clean the kitchen in turns, wash their own clothes, and weed the garden.



Generation 1970-1990 – Page, youngest daughter recalling memories of mother Daisy May

In the mid-70s my mom, Daisy May, worked morning shifts, and was home at lunch. I would get home before my mom came home from work, so she had her neighbor/friend come and watch me until after work every day. She was also going to school. My dad worked full-time.

There were three of us at home all at once (a total of five kids – spread out). My brother had four different sports activities he was involved in, (soccer, tennis, hockey, and baseball) as well as taking piano lessons. My sister had piano lessons, cheerleading, softball, and volleyball, while I played volleyball, piano lessons (at home), trombone, violin, and made art at home. My eldest sibling was out of the house and married, living in another state. (When my eldest sibling was a child, my mom was a stay at home mom, in the 1960's)!

To stay on top of all the sports, music lessons, recitals, work, as well as running the household, she did the following: My mom had a public calendar on the refrigerator – one for each kid, so that we were each responsible for our own activities and time too. She also had it all down on a paper calendar by the phone – she called it the “information center.” To stay on top of the household, she started dinner before she went to work, and used a slow cooker for many dinners. She packed our lunches the night before – making sure there was a note in each lunch sack. She had my brother get his sporting gear together ahead of time. She delegated household chores: We all had to clean our own bedroom, fold clothes, make our beds, and clean one of the bathrooms. She broke the cleaning of the kitchen down into parts: stove, floor, countertops, and kitchen table. Each week one of us would have to do one part of the kitchen. We all set the table in turn and loaded the dishwasher, switching turns each night. My dad did all of the yard work. My dad helped my mom carpool my brother to hockey and soccer games. My mom carpooled the rest of the time.



1990- Present- Lori, eldest daughter of Daisy May – her story

I am the eldest daughter of five kids. As was said before, my mom was a stay at home mom when I was a kid, but went to work and back to school after I was married. I have three kids of my own, who were all home at once and two years apart. My youngest was in dance, soccer, and swim lessons. My middle child was, and is, a sports fanatic! He was in soccer, hockey, and t-ball. My eldest had swim team, dance, and soccer. I worked full time, as did my husband – who traveled about three weeks out of the month, every month. I was basically a single mother with three children.

To get my kids to all of their activities without losing my mind, I took turns carpooling with other moms. I kept track of this on my public schedule in the kitchen. I did this for the kids and myself to keep track of who was doing what on which day. I grocery shopped every two weeks on my day off and took whichever kid was home, bribing him or her with a donut or something so that they would be good while we were in the grocery store.

We had a routine set up, we had to. Every day when the kids got home from school I would immediately empty their schoolbags and put the important handouts or schedules on the refrigerator. That way when the teacher wanted my son to bring in a potato for an art project the following Thursday, he had one ready. After I emptied their backpacks, I would make dinner. Then I would sit down with the eldest to do homework with her. Then came the bath time with all three kids and getting them into bed, which was always fun and challenging. Two of them were always easy; it was one, who I won't name, that was always a pistol about going to bed on time! After they finally went to bed, I would clean up the kitchen, make their lunches and pack their back packs for the next day. I like to do this at night because in the mornings there was always too much of a ruckus.

Present – Update to Lori's story

Recently, I have divorced, and my kids go between houses. This makes the public calendar more of a challenge. The eldest is now in college and out of the state, while the younger siblings are still between homes. My son is participating in three sports, two of which go out of town for games. My ex-husband and I go to all of the games, which requires my using a public calendar for both personal and private appointments.

My office is my haven. I keep all of my schedules on my bulletin board at my desk and also on my "Group Wise" calendar on my computer. I like it because it pops up and reminds me of games and recitals for my kids. That is now how I keep schedules for everything. I feel that it would be different if I was a stay at home mom. I keep the kid's schedule straight with my ex-husband's by emailing him appointments and schedules. That is how I do things in the modern age!

Whatever type of system your mom had, extravagant or not, she did have one! What tools can you take from that childhood experience and use in your own life? Perhaps the best Mother's Day gift you could give your mom this year would be to think about what impact she had on you, and tell her about it. Nothing says love like sharing your admiration and respect with someone you truly care about.