

# Ask The Closet Lady?

by Ellyn Gellar Elstein



"I am a builder in the Lehigh Valley area. Unfortunately, I am lost on how to create better closets for my clients. I know that adequate organized storage areas are very important to new homeowners. Please help!"

Signed,  
A Builder with a need...

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You are right! Primary to most homeowners is the desire for terrific closet space. Owners used to look for large closets. Now, that is not enough! The contractors must also make the home space efficient. People want organized closets when they move into a home. The old plank and rod is out!

People are getting fed up with the wasted space above and below the "traditional" shelf and rod. Besides, with wardrobes becoming more extensive, this space cannot afford to be wasted. As I walk through homes with my clients, I hear the frustration they are feeling. More often I hear the comments, "I can't believe they still do closets this way!" and "This is so old fashioned!"

Let's look at this from another standpoint. If you maximize the space in the closets for a few hundred dollars, you can double to triple their usefulness. Thus, it is reasonable to actually decrease the size of the closet and make the room size larger. People like large rooms. They feel that they are getting more for their money. It makes sense, Doesn't it?

The best way to maximize these spaces is to obtain the assistance of a professional closet company. They are the storage experts. As a storage professional, not only am I asked by builders to preplan their closet areas, whether it be tract homes, custom homes or apartments, but I am also consulted to review blueprints. Equally important to the organization within is the correct skeleton of the closet. If the door style, size of the returns, width of the closet and placement of the lights doesn't work, neither will the closet, no matter what you do with it. More often than not, alterations in the schematics are

made. I'm sure you will agree that these changes are less costly in the blueprint stage than on site.

Here are some suggestions:

1. The closet opening in reach-in closets should be as close to the inside closet dimension as possible, creating minimal dead space and easier access.
2. Preference for door style is:  
A) Hinged or bi-hinged, B) Bi-fold, and C) Sliding (only when absolutely necessary). Hinged doors are number one because they create the easiest access to the interior and the doors themselves can be used for hooks or shoe storage.
3. Closet depth should be a minimum of 24" and the width of a walk-in closet should be at least 6 feet wide allowing for 2 feet of walk space between the clothes.
4. Linen closets should allow for at least a 16" deep shelf.
5. Every reach-in closet no matter how small should have a light placed in the front third of the closet.
6. In a walk-in closet, the ceilings should be at least 84" high to allow for some double hanging space. What exactly are homeowners looking for?  
A. 10-12 closets including an entry closet, a family coat closet, a pantry, a hallway linen, a linen closet in each bathroom, a closet in each bedroom at least 7 feet long and one to two walk-in master closets.  
B. They like double hanging space for shirts, skirts, blouses and jackets, shoe shelves (average number of men's shoes are 15 pair and women's average is 30 pair), sweater shelves and hooks.  
C. A well thought out and organized laundry room will go right to the heart of the lady of the house. This can include a folding table and a clothes sorting organizer.

By statistic, the three most requested closets to be organized are the master closets, the laundry area and the pantry. Remember, the woman is generally the most influential in choosing which home to buy, so naturally that is who you have to target. These are the areas she wants correct!

I hope these suggestions have

answered your question. Good luck in selling many homes with organized terrific closets!

*The Closet Lady  
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