

# BEFORE & AFTER

*During the carefree days of summer,  
make your home a peaceful space.*



Summer is a time for relaxation and wide-open spaces, indoors as well as out. Enjoying your home, while the breeze drifts through the open windows or the evening light fills the house, should be one of the season's simple pleasures—unless bills are piled high on the counter, newspapers and magazines are stacked on the living room floor, and the desk is overflowing with mail.

“When your space is in order,” says Nicole Gabai, founder of B. Organized in East Falmouth, “it gives a sense of peace. We often feel we have to go outside to relax, to the beach or the park, but you can bring some of that serenity to your own home.”

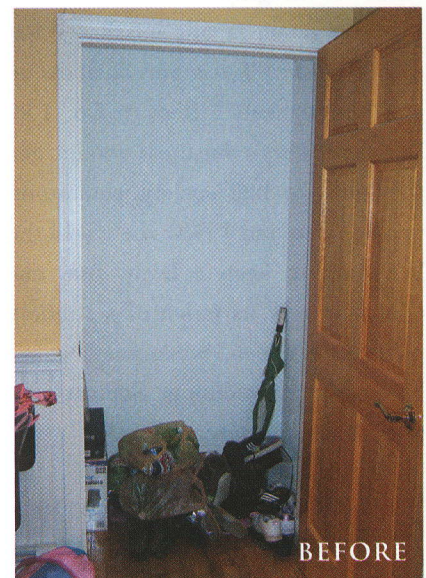
Whether you're looking to declutter your home office, kids' rooms, closets, or entire house, Gabai offers creative ideas and solutions for getting organized. You can start with simple steps that produce dramatic results, such as following one of Gabai's major rules: Every piece of paper needs a home.

“Everything needs to be vertical, so you can easily see what you have. Nothing in piles,” says Gabai. “If someone is starting a pile, they need files.” She puts mail into a sorter box, magazines in a basket. “I look at each piece of paper as a decision to be made,” she says. “If it's a bill, then it needs to be paid. An invitation will need a response.” Gabai advises devoting 15 minutes a day to handling and responding to paperwork. As she explains, “One of the key things to organizing is action.”

Ready to take action? Gabai offers the following tips for the rest of the house:

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
SEE MARKETPLACE ON PAGE 132.**

■ Gabai (above), who began her organization business in 1999, helped Erin and Doug Kennedy of North Falmouth make their entry closet a functional space. Besides introducing a shelf and a rod for hanging coats (organized by person), Gabai placed two shoe cubbies on top of one another, added a clear shoe organizer to the back of the door, and labeled a three-drawer cabinet for gloves, hats, and scarves.



BY KIRSTEN HALVORSEN STAHL  
“AFTER” PHOTOGRAPHY BY TERRY POMMETT



AFTER

# BEFORE & AFTER

■ Gabai tackled the disorganization and clutter of this New Bedford closet with inexpensive organization tools such as file boxes turned on their sides, which act as handy compartments for folded items, and a shelf for shoes. Outfit selections are much easier now that work clothes hang to the left and casual garments to the right. (opposite) Owner Jay Godleski, who never thought his closet was big enough, can now walk in and out of the space with ease.



# HELPFUL HINTS



## HOME OFFICE

Gabai follows a simple rule for mail. "I call it 'Save the article, toss the source,'" she says.

- ✓ Open bills immediately and throw out all of the contents (newsletters, offers, notices) except for the bill and return envelope. For catalogs, cut out any pages with items you want to buy, write the catalog's 1-800 number on them, and keep them in a "things to buy" file.
- ✓ For incoming mail, use a mail sorter box with graded compartments, all vertical, so you can easily flip through papers and see what's there. Place the box where you will use it, and sort mail daily.
- ✓ For bills and correspondence, Gabai suggests a step file—a slanted file with wire or plastic dividers. Use this for the files you need on a regular basis, such as "bills to be paid."

## FRONT HALL CLOSET

"Maximize height in a closet," says Gabai. "Use all of the space, working from the bottom up."

- ✓ Use shelving units or stackable milk crates for muddy shoes and bulky sneakers.
- ✓ Organize coats by family member and season. You can place labels on the closet rod to mark each category.

✓ Store mittens, hats, and gloves in hanging sweater racks. Place kids' items on the bottom, so children can reach their own.

✓ Use clear plastic drawers on the top shelf for umbrellas, bulky baseball caps, out-of-season items, even board games or puzzles.

## KIDS' ROOMS

"Zones make it easier to navigate a room," says Gabai. Creating compartments for art supplies, toys, books—think of a kindergarten classroom—make the space feel calm.

- ✓ Divide kids' rooms into zones. Designate one area for reading and night-time, another area for art and play, and another for clothing.
- ✓ Store similar items together—crayons, puzzles, beads, makeup—in clear plastic drawers.
- ✓ Hang a bulletin board for photos and artwork. Choose a few important things to display, and store the rest.
- ✓ Make sure kids have a desk in their room for schoolwork. Create binders or files for spelling, math work, science projects, or music sheets.

## MASTER BEDROOM CLOSET

Again, think zones. Gabai designates space by season—for example, the left side for spring/summer and the right for fall/winter—and keeps like items together.

- ✓ Put shelves on the bottom of the closet for shoes. Store shoes with the toe facing out.
- ✓ Fold pants in half, rather than long and straight, to gain more space below.
- ✓ Hang similar items together: pants, skirts, long-sleeve shirts, short-sleeve shirts. Also, separate work and casual clothes if there is a distinction.
- ✓ Store sweaters and knits in milk crates, sweater boxes (remember to label what's inside), or clear boxes on a shelf at the top of the closet.

## BATHROOMS

- ✓ In the cabinets under the bathroom sink, use clear plastic drawers. The items inside are visible, and the drawers are stackable.
- ✓ Place magazines vertically in an attractive bin or basket in the bathroom.

## FAMILY ROOM AND KITCHEN

Gabai reminds her clients to "keep only what you need and love." For those items you keep, "Give them a home that is pleasing to look at."

- ✓ For CDs and DVDs, get rid of jewel cases. Store the disk and liner notes in CD/DVD albums to cut down on visual clutter.
- ✓ Find a nice basket for newspapers in the family room or living room, and take out newspapers at least once a week.
- ✓ Keep magazines separate from newspapers, and stand them vertically in a pretty bin or basket.
- ✓ Stack clear plastic drawers under the kitchen sink for sponges, gloves, or other items.
- ✓ Store cleaning supplies in a bucket, so they're portable.

