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# Space race is on as many homeowners staying put

no need to add a room when you can use these 8 tricks.

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As homeowners recommit to their current house in the economic and housing downturn, they're looking for ways to find more space to make the most of what they have.

"People are saying, 'We're here for a while, so what can we do to make this place more usable and give us space?'" says Laura VanSickle who with her husband, Eric, owns Closets by Design in Charlotte.

The recession has been bringing people to her doors, VanSickle says, as homeowners look for ways to make their cluttered homes feel roomier.

But finding more space is often harder than installing a few bookshelves or cleaning out a closet. We asked area storage and organization experts for their best tricks to adding more square footage to your home without adding a room. Here are their tips.

**Think up.** There's often plenty of space up high in closets and pantries for another row of shelves – and often we don't fill the ones that are already there.

"We're really good at maximizing the horizontal space, but we forget about the vertical space," says Carson Tate, founder of the Charlotte organizational services company Living Simply. She recommends using the backs of doors to store items like shoes or accessories, and even the roof of a garage can be fitted with shelves to keep Christmas decorations or rarely used items such as car-top carriers.

Try to get some items off the ground if possible to free up floor space and make your rooms seem bigger. Would a lighted wall sconce work, instead of a table with a lamp on it? Do you need an entire bookcase, or would a few wall-mounted shelves suffice? In an office, install shelves 12 to 18 inches below the ceiling and line the walls with books. Add a small ladder and it'll have a library feel. And wall-mounting a flat-screen TV eliminates the need for a big media center.

**Have a bonus room? Put every inch to use.** "They're big, odd-shaped rooms and you don't know what to do with them," Laura VanSickle says. The trick, she says, is to carve them up into smaller spaces. Buy a wrap-around desk and fill it with office supplies to become your kids' homework corner. Use low shelves to create a nook for toys, and another nook for video games and all the gaming accessories. "It's amazing how you can squeeze a lot of use into a room," VanSickle says.

**Transform your guest room into an office, exercise room or living area by adding a Murphy bed.** Murphy beds flip up

for vertical storage inside a cabinet, and are ideal space savers because they are just 18 to 20 inches deep – in some cases even allowing your bed to transform into a wall of bookshelves.

Today's Murphy beds are far more comfortable and easy to use than those of decades past, and much prettier, too. Now, Murphy beds accept regular mattresses and can be flipped open or closed easily with one hand. One local Murphy bed retailer, Buy Bye Beds in the Arboretum shopping center, sells Murphy beds starting at \$1,599, including the mattress. The company also sells cabinets that contain fold-away "drop tables" ideal for crafting, sewing or other projects that you don't need out every minute.

Murphy beds are making a comeback in urban settings – Buy Bye Beds has been hired by developers to install them in some Boulevard Centro condominiums uptown, says owner London Scialdoni.

**In kids' rooms, don't toss toys into giant toy bins, but instead give them low bookshelves with small containers for different types of toys.** Says Tate of Living Simply: Don't stack books on a bookshelf, because young kids often have trouble inching one book out and putting it back correctly. Instead, place a stack of books in a large square basket where they can be flipped through.

**Choose furniture wisely.** Skirted tables are perfect for stashing almost anything, and can be placed in almost any room of the house. A bench with a hinged lid is perfect for the foot of a bed or under a window, and is nice for storing linens, towels or clothes. Use long, flat storage boxes to keep items under beds or buy a set of ready-made steel bed risers to hike the bed up and allow for more storage. Leather storage ottomans do double duty in family rooms as seating or storage.

**Got a small, useless space? Fill it in with cabinets.** Master bathrooms tend to be huge in newer homes, and open walls are ripe for an extra cabinet to store necessities such as medicines, towels, linens or bath supplies, VanSickle says. One client asked her to create a built-in vanity in the corner of an odd-shaped closet.

**Install a hanging bar in your attic.** It's the perfect place to hang tablecloths that are used only a few times a year, Tate says. Buy a canvas bag at a storage or discount store, toss in some cedar chips and hang the linens. "They're out of the way and they stay nice and crisp and fresh."

First, here's the link to the slimline hanger: [www.slimlinehangers.com](http://www.slimlinehangers.com)

**Create more space in your closet.** Tate recommends having just one kind of hanger in your closet, as it makes clothes easier to see. Her choice: the slimline hanger ([www.slimlinehangers.com](http://www.slimlinehangers.com)). The hangers are slim, so they take up little space, and they're covered with a velvet-like material that won't allow your clothes to slip off. They're strong, so they won't bend even under the weight of a winter coat, she says.

(Murphy bed photos courtesy of:

London Scialdone, Buy Bye Beds,

Charlotte; children's room shots courtesy of Laura VanSickle of Closets by Design in Charlotte.)



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