

Ten tips for an organized kid zone

By Erin K. Witt

A child's room or nursery can be a decorating focal point of your home—whether it's done in hearts and flowers, a sports theme, or decked out in Disney characters. But because of the volume of toys, gear, and tiny clothes housed in the small space, these rooms also have the tendency to be the most poorly organized, cluttered, and messy areas of a home.

With a strategy for organization, however, your kid zone can be visually attractive and accessible to both you and your child. Home organization Web sites, including *Decor24.com* and *About.com* offer the following ten tips to help corral even the most unruly kids room.

Tip #1: Rather than automatically spending money on storage solutions, use what you have on hand first. Empty rectangular, plastic, diaper wet-wipe containers can be used to store small toys and blocks. Available in primary colors or pastels, wipe containers can be used with the flip up lid left on or removed to make a see-through bin. Label the recycled containers with a permanent marker to help children learn to sort their toys into the correct bin. If you decide to store a different group of toys, the label can be erased with a dry paper towel and finger nail polish remover.

Tip #2: Hanging storage closet systems are ideal for kids. They are bright and colorful and are able to store closet items in a way that enhances visibility for a child. Designed with multiple, roomy pockets, they can hold shoes, toys, and clothes, and hang over any standard closet rod. Because the front is open, it is easier for your child to put things away, too. To make the closet even more kid-friendly, install a second rod lower to the ground so the clothes that your child wears are easily accessible; keep dress-up clothes on the higher rod.

Tip #3: If your child has room under their bed, consider adding four rolling wheels to a yard sale dresser drawer. Most twin beds can accommodate two or more drawers, enabling easy toy cleanup or seasonal clothing storage. Or, when it is time to buy a new bed, opt for a captain's bed with built in drawers instead of the usual box spring and mattress. Your child will gain storage space equivalent to an additional dresser.

Tip #4: Over-the-door vinyl pouch organizers can help a child contain pads, pencils, markers, or school supplies. A hanging shoe bag can also be a great tool to organize small stuffed animals, toy cars, arts and crafts materials, or Barbie dolls. Storing toys this way keeps them in a child's view, rather than forgotten in the bottom of a toy box.

Tip #5: Add a skirt to a desk or bookshelves to hide storage boxes and make the room look neat and tidy.

Tip #6: Many parents are frustrated with the “stuff” on the floor. Make sure your child has both a wastebasket and a hamper in their room. Get creative—install a small

basketball hoop above the area for the laundry or wastebasket. This creates a much more interesting and fun way to encourage kids to put socks in a hamper or papers in a basket.

Tip #7: Make a mini-office for your children. To promote healthy study skills in the future, kids need a designated work area of their own. If floor space allows, a desk or portable work area is definitely a wise investment.

Tip #8: Kids rooms need shelves at both a child and an adult level. Make sure the shelving is secure, solid, and properly installed. Even the most innocent child can become adventurous—proactive safety measures can help prevent future accidents. Shelving space out of a child's reach can store seasonal clothes, toys that they haven't grown into yet, toys that are display items, or seasonal sports gear. Shelves within a child's reach can house shoes, books, and any toys consistently used.

Tip #9: It is extremely helpful to utilize open bins when storing items on lower shelves for the kids. They can easily see the items, without creating a mess when reaching for a specific item. Clear storage containers with assorted colored lids are another option. The child will know the contents of each container because of the color-coding, and it is far more fun and enticing to return things to their proper home.

Tip #10: Use vertical storage solutions. Install hooks to the back of children's doors to hang backpacks and coats. Hardware stores also offer a long cork and metal running board that can be installed to hang artwork or notes.