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A FRESH START

An organized mom puts her skills to the test in her own front entryway to ease the daily search for coats and shoes.

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MY LEAST-FAVORITE WORDS ARE SHOES, SHOES, SHOES. I feel like that's all I ever talked about with my kids, Paul, 8, and Claire, 12, as we tried to leave each day. We're all tall, including my husband, Kevin, so our shoes take up a lot of prime real estate by the door, inside our front closet, and near the built-in bookcases set right off the tiled entry. The black-rubber shoe trays I bought to contain the situation helped a little, but they look like they belong in the garage instead of by our front door. Our array of coats added to the mess, and then there were Zippy's dog leashes to contend with. All of this clutter led to endless squabbles about "Where did you put it last?"

I turned to Des Moines interior designer and organizer Cathy Kramer of Cathy Kramer Designs to help us regain control. "Everyone struggles with shoes and coats. People tend to accumulate more and never get rid of any," Kramer said.

Together we focused on editing the number of shoes and coats to the ones we regularly wore. Kramer replaced too-small gold hooks by the door with two-prong hooks for each of us—even Zippy. She added a narrow umbrella stand that slides in between the wall and the radiator.

The whittling continued on our bookcases. We thinned out the accessories, donated the books we were done reading, and reduced the number of photos on display. Kramer covered the shelves with a washable liner to protect the wood from the shoes and refresh the overall feel. And we replaced the black shoe trays with more attractive copper ones.

There was just one more place to tackle: the overflowing front closet. Kevin and I had made a half-hearted attempt at organizing it by installing hooks and shelves, but it wasn't enough. Kramer took advantage of the closet's depth and height to design a customizable closet system that maximizes the available space and gives us a place for both long and short coats. She hung two sliding hook rails on each side wall to hold backpacks and totes. An over-the-door organizer made my favorite flats easy to spot and kept Kevin's workout shoes off the floor. Each of us received our own labeled white waterproof bins for mittens and hats.

Now our entry looks pretty instead of messy. The best part—no more wasting time on shoes every morning. They're always right where we can find them.

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OPPOSITE We used to layer coats on top of more coats, instead of thinning them out. We spent one day sorting through our outerwear and hanging the items we wear daily on new double hooks by the front door. Everything else moved to a designated place in the closet.



"Our family didn't prioritize cleaning up our entry. After one too many fights over finding a missing shoe, I called for a front-door redo."

—SAMANTHA THORPE,
HOMEOWNER



1 Interior designer and organizer Cathy Kramer selected a customizable closet system with coated-wire shelves to optimize the closet by our front door. The 47-inch depth allowed room to hang an adjustable organizer on the back of the closet door.

2 Our front entry closet was our guilty secret. We used it to hide all the things we didn't want to put away elsewhere. Tucked under the stairs, it is deep, tall, and narrow, but a boxed-in air duct in the upper right corner made it hard to take advantage of the 9-foot height.

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3 A rail-based closet system lets us adjust our shelf height to utilize every inch. We even had room to stash some of Paul's baseball hats between bins.

4 Clear liners protect the shelves from wet gear. Claire and Paul both swim, so Kramer brought in two separate stackable waterproof bins to hold their goggles.

5 We collect all of Zippy's stuff in one basket. Her baggies and treats nest inside their own smaller containers to make everything easy to find.

6 This stackable block container system creates a mini drop zone by the door for tissues, sunglasses, notes, and more.



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7 Kramer helped us lighten up our bookcase, literally and visually, by narrowing down our accessories and swapping out brown bins and black shoe trays with lighter-tone options.

8 Our built-in shelves are right beside our front door. I love using them to display our favorite photos and books, but we got into the bad habit of adding more without ever removing any.

Stick-on labels remind us what goes where.

