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## A Clean Garage Equals a Happy Car



Kristin White del Rosso

Is your garage out of control? **Is it so packed with things that there is no room for your car?** Or maybe you can't find the garden rake because it's buried behind piles of boxes and other garden tools? It's time to get your garage back and make proper use of one of the most commonly used areas of the home.

According to the National Association of Professional Organizers, 50 percent of homeowners rate the garage as the most disorganized place in the house and a place the entire family uses regularly.

However, garages aren't really used for what they were originally intended. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, the definition of garage is: "a shelter for motor vehicles." This definition is becoming more and more obsolete!

When you drive down many neighborhoods in Charlotte, North Carolina you will notice thousands of dollars worth of vehicles stuck out in the elements while the garages are full with "stuff" usually worth substantially less and often not even used. Why? **We tend to use the garage as a dumping space for everything from yard supplies to sports equipment to boxes of items without other "homes."** Once you start doing that, without really planning your space, you can end up with an indoor junkyard attached to your house.

Furthermore, a haphazard garage is an accident waiting to happen. By cleaning, organizing and properly storing items, you can greatly reduce the risk of injuries, such as tripping over something or cutting yourself on a sharp object.

Does the concept of doing a garage makeover overwhelm you? Here are 10 helpful tips to finally get your garage back.

1. **Pull everything out and categorize it before you organize it.** When organizing, it's best to start with a clean slate. So, while everything is out, take the opportunity to vacuum up the cobwebs and dirt, and wash down the floor.
2. When in doubt, **get rid of it.**
3. Organize items by type such as sports, yard and car supplies. Make a plan of how you will group these items in the garage. **For example, keep the sports equipment most accessible if that is used most often.** Devise a plan that works best for your family and needs.

4. Organize items so that they are visually clear. If you can see it, you can find it.

5. Plan the proper space for your car, including opening all the car doors. A great way to gauge how far you should pull a car into a garage to clear the garage door is to hang a tennis ball by a string from the ceiling. Where the ball meets your windshield indicates how far you should pull forward.

6. Make use of vertical space on the walls and ceiling. Try to avoid storing anything on the floor. **If possible, mount cabinets a few inches off the floor.**

7. Using a combination of hanging hooks, open shelving and closed cabinets often works well to store the different types of items that a garage holds.

8. Use containers to keep all loose items from spreading out. Clear plastic tubs are great to contain and still see what you have. Peg boards with metal hooks work great to hang tools to keep them visible and handy.

9. Put everything away after you use it and it will remain neat and organized.

**10. Always consider your safety when organizing the garage.** For example, don't store flammable materials in glass containers and keep all sharp tools and gardening products out of a child's reach.

Just as you maintain your car and the interior of your home, make cleaning your garage a regular habit. Think of the dirt that gets tracked into our garages every day. Whether it's from car tires (assuming your car can fit in your garage!), shoes, garden tools, sawdust from power tools or mud from baby stroller wheels, garages are a magnet for dirt. Regularly sweeping and dusting off the cobwebs will make a big difference and will also help you keep your garage organized. Make it routine to hose off your garden tools, lawnmowers and stroller wheels before storing them back in the garage to cut down on the dirt.

With all sorts of unique and attractive garage organizing products on the market today to fit many price ranges, you will be set to get your garage back in order and to create a functional and efficient space. **So pick a pretty weekend, get organized and give your car the home it deserves!**

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Kristin White del Rosso is President and owner of Pea Organizing Services, Inc. and an expert in turning disarray into a system that works. She is continually seeking a simpler, more efficient and more effective way to live and work. She is able to see beyond the chaos of physical and informational clutter and visualize workable systems that fit into individual lifestyles. Kristin believes that "It's okay not to have all this stuff!" and begins formulating an Action Plan even as she is gathering data on the problem at hand. She pays attention to the smallest details and seeks immediate results to motivate her clients for long-term change. By calmly assisting clients to adopt a system for an organized and managed environment, Kristin creates an atmosphere that reduces stress and gives clients peace of mind. Kristin has been awarded the Certificate of Study in Basic Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) Issues, Certificate of Study in Chronic Disorganization, and Certificate of Study in Learning Styles and Modalities from the National Study Group of Chronic Disorganization (NSGCD). In addition to NSGCD, Pea Organizing Services is a member of ADD Consults, ADD Resources, Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD), the International Association of Professional Organizers (IAPO), and the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO). Founded in 2000, Pea Organizing Services, Inc. specializes in creating an organized and manageable environment at home and at the office. Pea Organizing Services serves clients in the greater Charlotte, NC area.

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