



Build a Closet Organizer

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Closets are one of the most used areas of a house and usually the least organized. With a little work you can double your closet's storage capacity and organize it so you can spend the time used searching on more productive things – like shopping.

This project is an easy-to-make system that's adaptable to fit your needs and is a fraction of the price of store-bought kits. It combines a shelving unit in the middle (you can leave it open or add drawers) with two rods on one side (for short clothes like shirts, pants, sport coats, etc.) and one rod for long clothes (dresses, coats, etc.) on the other side. There are storage shelves over the rods as well.

Materials Checklist

- Primer
- Paint
- 2-pcs. of ¾-in. plywood (20-in. deep and your selected height) for unit
- ¾-in. plywood (20-in. deep & your selected width) for shelves
- 2-pcs. of ¾-in. plywood shelving that are 12-in. deep and long enough to go from side of unit to wall
- 2 closet flanges with the diameter of closet rod
- 3 closet rods (you determine length)
- 24-in. long 1x2 wood
- 1-in. screws (approximately 18)
- ½-in. screws (approximately 20)
- 4 shelving standards
- 4 shelf clips for each shelf
- 4 angle brackets
- 4 combination brackets
- 2, 2-in. screws
- Drawers with runners (optional)

Tools Checklist

- Block of wood
- Hammer
- Flat pry bar
- Stud finder
- Pliers
- Tape measure
- Level
- Pencil
- Saber saw
- Masking tape
- Sandpaper
- Paint brushes
- Hacksaw
- Electric drill with screwdriver attachment

Step 1. Disassemble the Closet

It is important to completely remove and save the existing shelf and pole parts from the closet because you can reuse them. A shelf and pole system is easy to remove without damage because the individual parts are usually not glued together. The order of removal is important. First, remove the clothes pole and the center support bracket (if one exists). Next, use a block of wood and a hammer at the underside of the shelf and tap upward to remove it. The block, placed between the shelf and the hammer, reduces the chance of splitting wood. Finally, remove the support strips (you will not need to remove the pole brackets from the side supports) with a hammer and a flat pry bar.



Tip: Using the Pry Bar

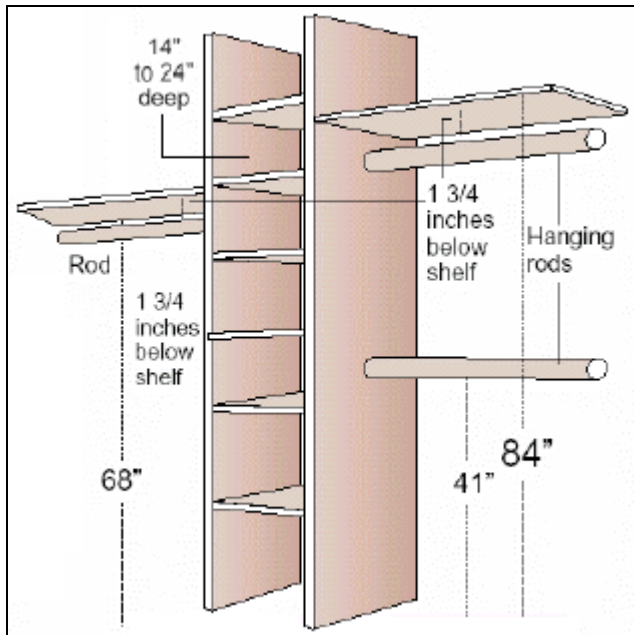
Prying between the support strip and the wallboard can damage the wallboard. So, make sure to pry at locations on the wall where studs exist. Don't drive nails back through the parts that you have removed. Doing so may damage the finished surface. Instead use a pair of pliers to pull the nails through the bottom side of the shelf and the backside of the support strips.

Step 2. Design the Closet Organizer

Use a stud finder to locate the studs behind the closet walls. Then use a tape measure to get the dimensions of your closet and the distance between the studs. Measure your longest short clothes already hanging and add 3 inches. The lower rod on the side with 2 rods should be 3 inches lower than the bottom of the short clothes to give room for the hangers. Remember, the brackets at the ends of the rods need to be attached to studs. The sides of the shelving unit attach to studs as well. See diagram in Step 4 for recommended measurements of shelves and rods.

Step 3. Draw Level Layout Lines

Measure where the top shelves over the rods are going to be. Use a level and mark in pencil a line long enough to be a guide for the shelf brackets.



Step 4. Cut Plywood for Shelving Sides and Over-the-Rod Shelves

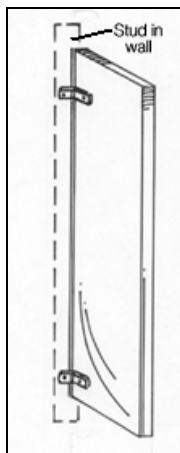
Use the saber saw to cut the 2 side pieces for the shelving unit as well as the 2 shelves for over the closet rods. When cutting the plywood, the front (finished side) needs to face down to avoid splintering it. To keep from splintering the back, cover the cut line with masking tape before you cut. Sand the shelves and sides. The shelves for the unit are cut in Step 8.

Step 5. Paint Shelving Sides and Over-the-Rod Shelves

Apply primer and paint to the shelves and the sides. It is easier to paint these before you put them up. The shelves for the shelving units are painted in Step 8.

Step 6. Attach Standards to Shelving Unit

Use a hacksaw to cut the shelving standards so that they are long enough to run from the top of the shelving side to the bottom. Attach standards, using 1/2-inch screws, on both sides of each shelving side. They are placed 1-inch in from the front and back ends. There are numbers stamped on the standard and they should be right side up.



Step 7. Attach Sides of Shelving Unit

Attach an angle bracket to the top and the bottom of the shelving side using the 1/2-inch screws. Place the side at a right angle to the wall and use the level to make sure the side is vertical. The side needs to be positioned so that the other end of the angle bracket is on the stud. Mark on the wall where the holes in the angle bracket are. Drill 1-inch screws through the bracket, attaching it to the wall stud. Repeat with the other side. (See diagram at left.)

Step 8. Cut and Paint Shelves for Unit

Measure the shelves to make sure they fit between the shelving standards. Cut and sand if they are too wide. Paint the shelves and allow them to dry. Put the shelf clips into the standards (count the holes in the standard or use the numbers stamped on the standard as guides so the clips are at the same height) and insert the shelves.

Step 9. Attach Upper Shelves and Rod Brackets

Attach the combination brackets to the wall studs using the 1-inch screws. Use the lines marked on the wall as guides. Put the rod into the combination bracket and attach the shelf to the bracket, using 1-inch screws. Repeat this for the other shelf with a rod.

Step 10. Attach Lower Rod

On the wall, measure down the wall to where you are putting the closet rod and make a mark. Measure 12-inches from the back of the closet and mark so that you have an "X" where the rod goes. Mark 2 lines with a pencil that are 1 inch above and 1-inch below the "X". Find the studs on either side of the "X" and measure the distance between the two studs. Cut the 1x2 board that length, this is what the flange is affixed to. Using the 2-inch screws, attach the 1x2 piece to the studs. The piece should be between the two lines. Measure the distance from the 1x2 to the shelving side. Cut the closet rod 1/4-inch shorter than this distance (this makes it easier to slide the rod into place). Slip the 2 flanges onto the rod, one for each end. Slide the rod into position. Use the level to make the rod horizontal. Attach the flange to the 1x2 using 1-inch screws and attach the other flange to the shelving side using 1/2-inch screws.

Step 11. Install Drawers (optional)

If you want drawers, you can attach drawer runners to the side or bottom of the shelves in the shelving unit. Attach these runners using the 1/2-inch screws. If the runners go on the sides, you might have to cut them so that they fit between the shelving standards.

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