

# ON THE HOUSE



## Maximizing Closet Space

By James Carey and Morris Carey

The dictionary definition of home storage space should be, "the one thing there is never enough of."

Yet, maximizing existing closet space is among the least expensive of home improvement projects.

In most homes, clothes closets are equipped with a single shelf and pole. The shelf rests on three support strips (one across the back and one at each side). A **hardwood pole** is usually mounted on **wood or plastic end brackets**. And when a closet is longer than four feet, a brace is used to add strength to the pole.

If you have a single shelf and pole in one of your closets, you may want to consider adding a second clothes pole. Doing so can increase clothing storage space by as much as 100%. In a five-foot closet, this can be accomplished in less than three hours and for under \$20.00. Here's how:

### Disassemble Closet

It is important to completely remove and save the existing shelf and pole parts. You will need to reuse them. A shelf and pole system is easy to remove without damage because the individual parts are usually not glued together. And assembly is usually accomplished with reasonably small finish nails. In many instances it can take longer to remove the clothing from the closet than it takes to remove the shelf and pole assembly from the walls.

The order of removal is important:

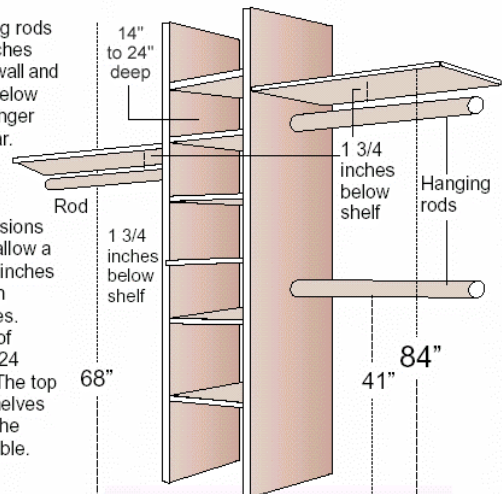
1. First, remove the clothes pole then remove the center support bracket (if one exists).
2. Next, use a block of wood and a **hammer** at the underside of the shelf and tap upward to remove it. The block, placed between the shelf and the hammer, reduces the chance of splitting the shelf.
3. Finally, remove the support strips (you won't need to remove the pole brackets from the side supports). This part of the project requires a hammer and a **flat pry bar**.

### A simple closet organizer

Adjust height and widths to fit your closet's dimensions and use plywood in construction. Assemble and paint the tier of shelves before installation. Make sure to finish wooden rods with polyurethane.

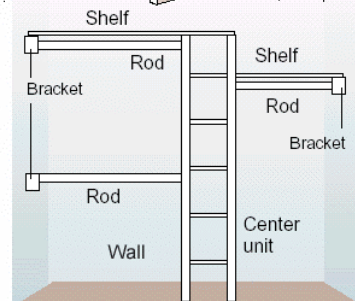
Locate hanging rods 12 or more inches from the back wall and 1 3/4 inches below shelves so hanger hooks will clear.

Vertical dimensions can vary, but allow a minimum of 3 inches space beneath hanging clothes. Make the tier of shelves 14 to 24 inches deep. The top and bottom shelves can be fixed, the others adjustable.



### Closet organizer kit

Cut side shelves and rods to fit between the center unit and the end walls. Organizer kits are designed to fit closets from 4 to 12 feet in length.



Continued... see reverse

**Caution**



**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, usually at corners, and where nail holes show in the support strip.**

**Don't drive the nails back through the parts that you have removed. Doing so may damage the finished surface. Use a pair of *pliers* to pull the nails through the bottom side of the shelf and the backside of the support strips.**

### Shopping List

Use the remaining parts to make a shopping list. The new parts that you will need should match exactly those that have been removed. Because two rows of clothing will hang where one row previously hung, the shelf you removed will have to be reinstalled at a point higher than before.

### Attach Supports

Placement of the shelf/pole supports is the next step. The closet pole "roses," (the **plastic or metal brackets** that the pole fits into), are attached to the shelf supports – which are then fastened to the wall.

While the upper supports will usually carry a shelf, due to space constraints, the lower supports will usually only carry a pole – no shelf.

### How High?

Although you may wish to use different measurements, here's what we recommend when it comes to the new pole height. The top of the lower set of shelf/pole supports should be installed 41 inches above the floor and the top of the upper set of shelf/pole supports should be installed 84 inches above the floor. Use two **8-penny bright finish nails** to connect the support strips to each available wall stud (pre-drilling might be required as old, dried studs can become very hard).

#### Materials Checklist:

- Hardwood closet pole/rod
- Closet pole roses (wood or plastic end brackets)
- Hammer
- Flat pry bar
- Pliers
- 8-penny bright finish nails
- 6-penny bright finish nails

#### Install Shelf

Next, install the shelf atop the upper set of support strips (use one **6-penny bright finish nail** every 16 inches or so), then the poles and center support brackets (if required).

There is a disadvantage to a full two-pole closet system. Long clothing has to be kept elsewhere. If this isn't possible a vertical divider can be used so that part of the closet accepts long clothing.

Ask your True Value store's employees for help with any questions, tools and materials needed for this project and many more.

*Morris and James Carey are nationally recognized experts on home building and renovation. They share their nearly half-century of experience as award winning licensed contractors with millions of people nationwide through weekly radio programming and a syndicated newspaper column both titled "On The House."*

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