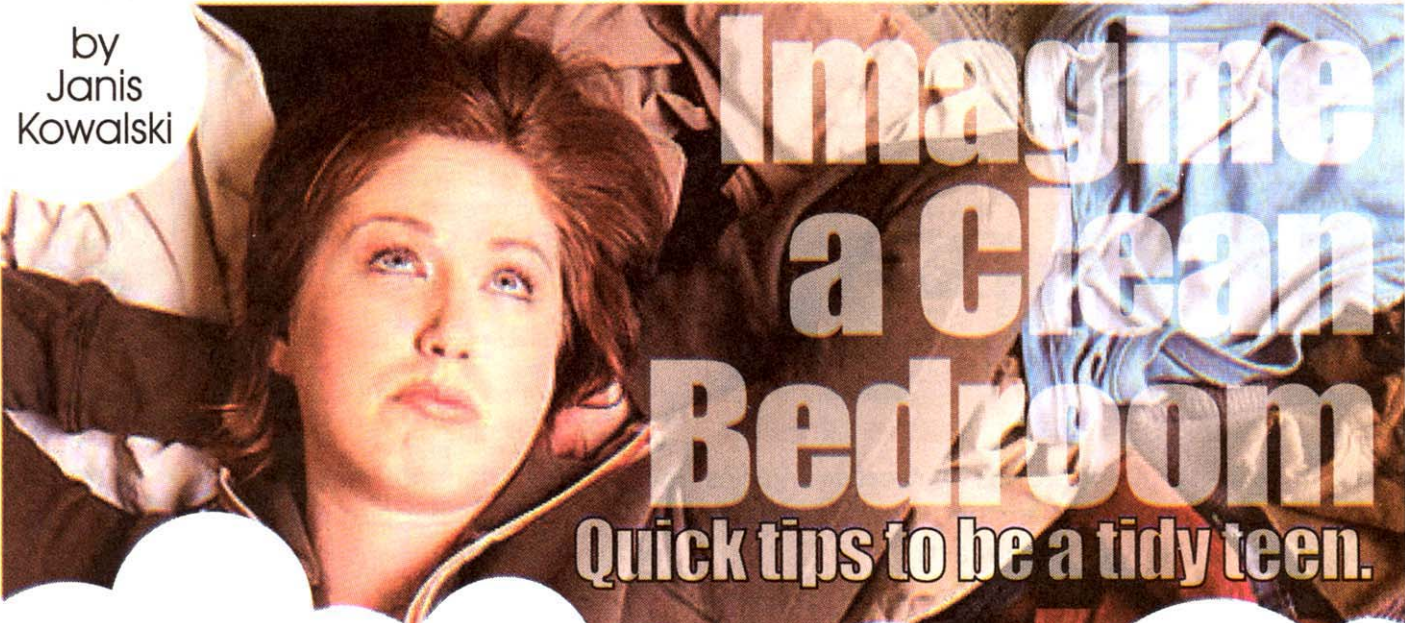


by
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Imagine a Clean Bedroom

Quick tips to be a tidy teen.

Dreams can come true. Parents and teens can live happily ever after, or at least have one less thing to argue about. By following a few key pointers, you can make your messy room—what your parents consider a danger zone—a thing of the past.

Do you have trouble putting things away? Teenagers are notorious for leaving books, water bottles, backpacks, papers and clothes strewn across the floor. Maybe the problem isn't you, or your age. Being unorganized with where you keep your belongings might stem from having too much stuff, or lacking an emotional connection to clothes and clutter for which you no longer have use. Leaving your belongings in all kinds of piles and heaps is not the answer. Instead, edit your things and get rid of items you have not used or appreciated in years. Overcrowded rooms with unloved stuffed animals, old cosmetics, battered sporting equipment and school papers from elementary school that lack sentimental value to you or your family members must go. All this unnecessary stuff results in a room full of clutter and chaos.

Your bedroom is your own personal space. It serves as a place to sleep, and if you are between 13 and 17 years old, it is your refuge from the world.

Bedrooms are multipurpose. They allow teens to do their homework, entertain friends, play video games, listen to music, watch TV and express their creative side with decorations, furniture and keepsakes. Bedrooms also reveal a teen's interests with the sports gear, trophies, posters, awards, photographs and hobby items a room houses.

A teen's room should be a positive and stimulating place. No one wants to do homework in a stale crowded room. And it is healthy to be surrounded by a clean, clear and organized space. When your room is clutter-free, you think more clearly, have more free time (because you spend less time cleaning), experience less stress from knowing where everything is and act in a more positive way.

Want to reap the benefits of having a tidy room? Start cleaning by getting two differently colored trash bags. Black could be used for trash collected from your room while a white bag could be used for donations. It is a fact that people only wear 20 percent of their clothing. Because most teens' closets and bureaus are bulging with clothing and apparel—some of which is from the kiddie years—the closets and dressers are the best place to begin cleaning. Just be sure you ask your parents if you alone can tackle what to toss and what to donate, or if they want to oversee your effort or get the final say. Then pull out and assess every piece of clothing. As you evaluate each garment or accessory, with or without your parents—ask yourself some simple questions: Do I like this shirt or pair of pants? When was the last time I wore it? Will I wear it again? Do I feel handsome or pretty in it?

If you haven't worn something since the 90s or you hate the way an item makes you look, check with your parents that you can get rid of the undesirables. A general rule of thumb: toss old ripped clothing and donate all of the good clothing that is no longer wanted.

For what you're keeping, immediately put the dirty clothing in a hamper. Also, keep similar clean apparel together—meaning all the sweaters with sweaters, all the pants with pants. Hang all dresses, slacks, skirts and blouses with metal or plastic hangers, rather than unsightly wire hangers that are prone to bend. Keep all jeans, sweaters, sweat suits, T-shirts, bathing suits and shorts in drawers according to type of garment. Hang up sturdy decorative hooks for hats, coats and backpacks. And find an appropriate place for containing your sports equipment or regularly used items, such as instruments or slippers.

Seven More Pointers on Tidying Up Your Room

- 1. Store out-of-season clothing in clear bins under the bed.** You can also keep stationery, memorabilia or photo albums in an under-bed storage container. If your bed is positioned on the ground without storage space, check with your parents to see if you may raise the bed up on canisters to create storage space.
- 2. Go through all of your footwear.** Access all of your shoes, sneakers, boots, flip flops, cleats and slippers and throw out anything worn out or outgrown.
- 3. Be ruthless with books and magazines.** Keep only one or two current magazines or tear out the articles of interest in each magazine and recycle the rest. Save only the books that you truly need and love. And speak to your school or parents about finding a good place to donate old literary items that people in the community might enjoy.
- 4. De-junk cosmetic clutter.** Keep the fresh products that you use regularly and store them in baskets or clear plastic containers. Check expiration dates on medications and

cosmetics to see if the items are past their due date. Beauty Web sites might offer insight, like to toss mascara that you've been using for more than three months.

- 5. Sort through your CDs, DVDs and video and computer games.** See if you can trade titles with friends, or sell or exchange unwanted media materials. Discs and other software that need to be kept should be stored in plastic boxes on bookcases or under the bed. Wall-mounted shelves might help for containing media items.

- 6. Set up a desk for homework.** It should have proper lighting, a large work surface and storage space or drawers for supplies. Put up a memo board on which to hang pictures or personal notes.

- 7. Hang a mirror behind the bedroom door.** Now you can check your appearance, as well as give the look of a larger room. And mirrors that make clean rooms look big give the impression of additional cleanliness—something you and your parents will appreciate.

An expert in the field of home and office organizing, Janis Kowalski is the co-owner of *Organizers To The Rescue*. She loves to rescue people from their messes and save them the stress of dealing with excess. Visit www.organizertotherescue.com or contact Kowalski at (845)753-8080 to learn more.