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## Five Easy Steps to Reorganize Your Pantry

Watch one family's pantry go from messy to organized in five easy steps that are simple enough to apply to your own kitchen space.



By [Kelley Walters](#)

With two toddlers and a newborn baby in the house, having an organized pantry isn't a luxury, it's a necessity. So when HGTV.com started looking for a pantry to make over, Scott Carter applied. Scott's wife, Hayley, had organized their bursting-at-the-seams space as well as she could, but it was clear from the photos that it was time for a professional intervention.

When we arrived at the Carters' house one rainy spring morning, the pantry overflowed with the detritus of a growing family: open cereal boxes, cans of kid-friendly soup and multipack juice boxes.

Enter professional organizer Karen Sprinkle of *Organize It* in Knoxville, Tenn. When faced with her own scarily disorganized closets several years ago, Karen read *Organizing From the Inside Out* by Julie Morgenstern, and was motivated to get her house in order.

It made such a difference in her life, she says, that "I realized I had to help other people do this, too." She now organizes all sorts of spaces, from home offices to garages, but "pantry design is my creative outlet."

### Get Organized Step by Step

Organization is part skill and part artistry, but there are simple steps you can follow that will work every time.

#### 1. Measure Twice

Time: 30 minutes

Materials and Tools: Measuring tape, pad, pen (or computer)

If you're outfitting your pantry with new shelving, the first step is to measure the space you want to organize. Measure the width and depth, and take note of any obstacles that could affect how shelves fit. Write down all measurements in your project notebook or computer file.

## 2. Inventory and Interview

Time: 30 minutes

Materials and Tools: Pad, pen (or computer)

The next step is to take an inventory of what's in your pantry and write it down in your project notebook or computer file.

The Carters' inventory included the following: paper goods, dry goods, rice and pasta, 2-liter bottles, lunch boxes, and art supplies

Since their baby was just a few weeks old, they hadn't had time to buy groceries and were low on items they typically stocked. Karen interviewed Hayley to find out what those items were, and how many of them they normally kept on hand. Once Karen had a complete list and all her measurements, she went home to research.

## 3. Research and Purchase Shelving

Time: 1-2 hours

Materials and Tools: Measurements, inventory, computer with Internet access

Search organizing resources, like Organize.com, EasyClosets.com or ContainerStore.com, with your measurements and inventory in hand. You'll get ideas for layout and storage options, from shelving to drawers to over-the-door hangers.

For the Carters' pantry, we used adjustable metal shelving and an over-the-door basket system purchased from The Container Store. They installed quickly using a level, drill and screwdriver.

Tip: Splurge on high-quality shelving and save by buying inexpensive containers.

## 4. Dump, Sort, Clean and Purchase Containers

Time: 1-3 hours, depending on size and state of pantry

Materials and Tools: Garbage bags, empty boxes, demolition tools, cleaning supplies

Chaos is the last step before organization. And boy, will this step



The pantry contents are sorted and ready for their new home.



Sort the things you want to

feel chaotic. Clear off your kitchen table or countertops and get a stack of empty boxes. Then start going through the pantry. Throw out any expired products, or anything you know you won't use.

Sort the things you want to keep into boxes of like items. For instance, we had a box of rice and pasta, one of canned goods, one of juice boxes, another of cereal, etc. This organizational step makes storing the items in their final containers much faster.

keep into boxes of like items. This organizational step makes storing the items in their final containers much faster.

Once everything is thrown away or sorted, you're faced with an empty pantry. Now's the time to demolish old shelving, repair and paint walls and clean the floor. If you're working with existing components, give them a good scrub and touch up the paint.

Then make a new list of the type, size and number of storage containers you'll need for the items you're keeping. If you purchased an over-the-door holder with baskets, include this on the list. (Purchase enough storage containers to hold the items in your pantry now as well as items you usually stock but don't currently have on hand.) For the Carters' pantry makeover, we used small and medium Sterilite baskets, 1- and 2-tier turn tables and Snapware Grip Canisters.

Use the turn tables for cans and bottles, like soups, oils and vinegars. Use the baskets to corral bags of rice, pasta and chocolate chips. Canisters are great for bulk items you always keep on hand, like flour, cornmeal, crackers and chips. Not only does it make it easier to scoop out a cup of flour or oatmeal, but it makes it easier to see how much is left (if you use clear containers). That's a huge help on grocery day because you can quickly assess what you need.

Once you get everything back into your pantry, the orderliness alone will make it look fabulous. But if you have the budget, the artistic desire or an open pantry, you might consider buying wicker baskets or canisters with more design flair.

## 5. Organize It

Time: 1-2 hours, depending on pantry size

Materials and Tools: Canisters and baskets, label maker or labels and a marker

Finally, the moment you've been waiting for. Gather your boxes of pantry goods, new containers, a label maker or labels and marker.

Then begin transferring items from the old boxes to their new containers.

Before you put the containers in the pantry, label them with a label maker or marker. This may make you feel a bit like Martha at first, but after your husband and kids (or you, before your first cup of coffee) put the cereal back in the right place, you'll realize that sometimes it's ok to be a little



The pantry before its makeover

compulsive.

Total Time: 4-8 hours, depending on pantry size

Total Cost: Materials for this project, including shelving, shelf liners, baskets and containers, rang in at just under \$500. If this is the first time you've organized a pantry, and want some guidance, consider hiring a professional organizer. They charge by the hour or project, and rates vary according to their service but their guidance is invaluable.

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