

# SHOP YOUR CLOSET

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE  
to Organizing Your Closet with Style



Melanie Charlton Fascitelli

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 HarperCollins e-books

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SHOP  
YOUR  
CLOSET

The title 'SHOP YOUR CLOSET' is displayed in a playful, multi-colored font. 'SHOP' is in green, 'YOUR' is in pink, and 'CLOSET' is in blue. To the left of the word 'CLOSET', there is a stylized illustration of a high-heeled shoe with a green and white striped heel.

The Ultimate Guide  
to Organizing  
Your Closet  
with Style

Melanie Charlton Fascitelli  
with Kevin Clark

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This book is dedicated to my father John C. Charlton, Jr., the person  
who made me ambitious and instilled the confidence in me that I  
could be anything I wanted to be.

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# FOREWORD

When I began my company a few years ago, I learned an important lesson: Nothing good comes easy. *Shop Your Closet* is an actualization of that lesson. After several rewrites of the initial proposal, switching coauthors, meeting with literary agents, and almost bagging the entire project, we finally arrived at this point—a book articulating my vision. This book represents the brand, the design niche, the lifestyle mantra that my company, Clos-ette, is today.

The best thing about the Clos-ette vision is that it was an underdog; no one really thought it would take off. And many didn't see the niche market I was trying to create. I heard time and again, "I don't get it." Luckily, *Vogue*, which wrote the first editorial piece on us, got it, encouraging me to stay focused and on vision. Slowly, I became better at explaining our mission, and people began to understand the value and the need for organization in their busy lives. Today, Clos-ette is a holistic organizational design firm, a cabinetry business supporting organizational design ideas and ideals with a comprehensive accessories line to further enhance and achieve the organized lifestyle we all strive for.

Did it matter if anyone thought that a company based on a little girl's obsession with clothes, closets, and organization would become a comprehensive business, complete with actual employees, offices, and individual retirement accounts? Not really. I believed in Clos-ette from day one; I knew that a lot of people liked to "shop their closet," so I figured out ways to make it easier and more fun. I felt that it was my personal goal



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(actually, my duty) to clear the clutter in people's closets (what I like to call their clogged wardrobe chi) and instill a sense of serenity within their master walk-in by putting things in order and awakening the hidden Buddha buried beneath the piles of clothes and layers of stuff.

*Shop Your Closet* is part how-to workbook, part design guide, and part style notebook. It is a written manual of how we approach our work at Clos-ette and how we accomplish the goals needed to enhance our clients' lives. Our secrets and insider tips to styling, organizing, designing, and building closet spaces are clearly and concisely contained within this book to help you begin your journey on the path of organization and clutter-free closets.

*Shop Your Closet* has been a path of self-discovery. It allows me to share with you all the things that I have learned from building Clos-ette: the joy of working with wonderful clients in their beautiful homes and enhancing their lives by creating beautiful closets and organizing their chaotic spaces into serene havens. It also is a culmination of my years in my former career putting together retail spaces and stores, while editing and styling my own wardrobe and personal spaces. But the greatest influences were crafting and creating my own closets in the homes I lived in with my mother and father and the valuable insights they passed on to me—my father's tips about clothes and his need for quality and quantity in combination with my mother's penchant for arranging things in a neat and crisp way. All of these experiences fill the pages of this book, which I hope will help you shop your closet. Enjoy!

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank my family, especially my mother and father, who took such good care of me my entire life, for supporting and encouraging my dreams and aspirations, and my brothers John and Luke for being part of the “triplets” and my best friends. I also thank my friends who supported and encouraged me during this long process, including my literary agent, Stacey Glick; my attorney, Hillary Hughes; Kevin Clark; Keith Geldof; Douglas Friedman; my editor, Anne Cole; and my publishers at HarperCollins. I thank Deborah and Dean Lorch; Burt and Judy Resnick; Christine Schwarzman; Dog Productions; Designer Resale; my In-laws Drs. David Fascitelli and Noel Salem; Mr. and Mrs. Friedman; and Dan Nissanoff. On a special note, many thanks to Caroline Callahan, whose work and vision helped shape the scope of this book. Lastly, I would like to thank my husband, Jon, who has more enthusiasm about everything I do than I do myself and inspires me every day that I am with him. . . . I love you! Thank you, one and all!

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# INTRODUCTION

The piercing shriek of your alarm clock jolts you awake. Your bare feet touch the cold floor. As you slowly gain consciousness, the age-old question that you face every morning enters your brain: *What am I going to wear?*

While you stumble toward the closet, you think of a great outfit—those fabulous black pants that fit perfectly, maybe a tailored button-down shirt for a uniform look, and your favorite stylish red shoes to add a dash of color—but then you discover that the pants are a wrinkled mess, the shirt is missing buttons . . . and the red shoes? Well, you found the left one, but the right is missing in action. What do you do now?

“What should I wear, and where the hell is it?” is a far more complex issue than most of us are willing to admit. This two-pronged question spawns a host of others: How do you build a wardrobe that won’t leave you feeling as if you’d be better off naked? One that allows you easy access to versatile, attractive looks? How do you cultivate a personal style that works for you? And once you have this style and have bought the clothes, how do you organize, store, and preserve them so that they’re easy to see and reach?

*Shop Your Closet* is the answer to all of these questions. It is a go-to guide for all of your concerns about organizing your wardrobe and making your closet an easy, appealing clothes sanctuary. The book is divided into three main sections. The first, “Be Your Own Editor,” will instruct you



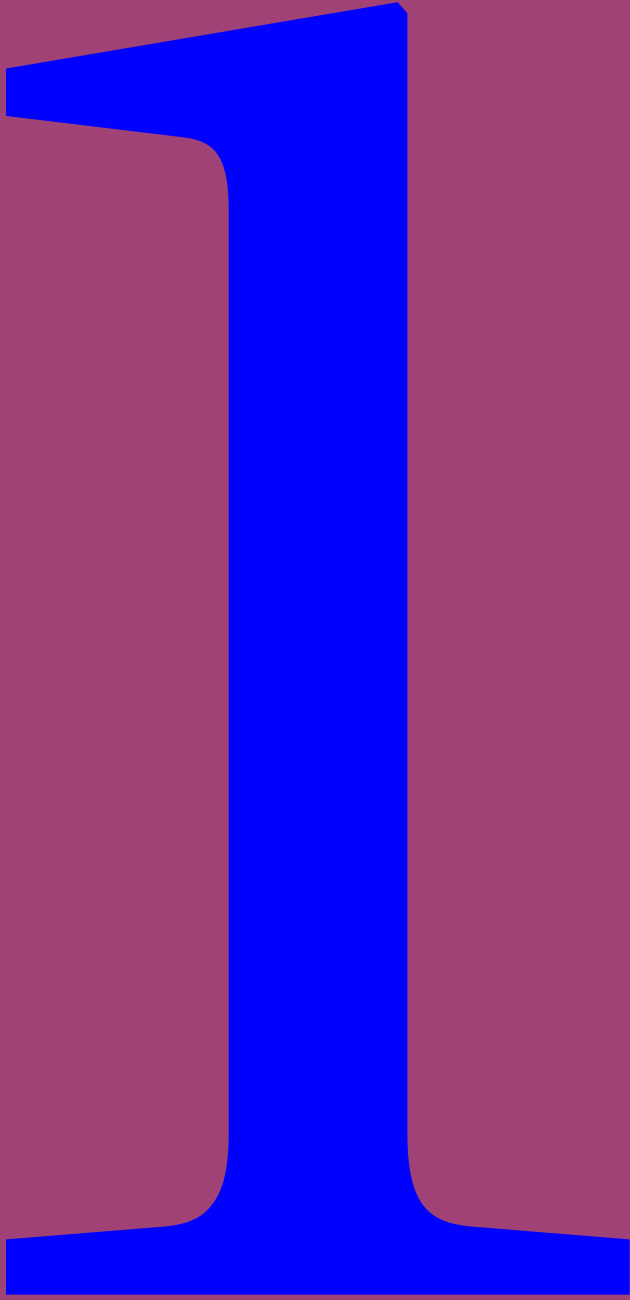
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on how to let go of your clothing clutter and maximize and enhance your existing wardrobe. Additionally, it will help you define your personal style and accentuate that style with clothing pieces that may be missing from your existing wardrobe. The second section, “In the Closet,” deals with the logistics behind closet organization, helps you decide what organizational tools to buy, and explains how to best use those tools—from hangers to hooks—on a day-to-day basis. Included are tips on how best to store clothing items, from beaded gowns to winter coats, and the debate over whether to hang or to fold is settled once and for all. The third section, “Staying Organized,” has guidelines for maintaining your closets on a daily basis and addresses the life-altering question “What do I do when she moves in?” It also provides helpful hints on how to adapt these ideas to other areas of your home, from the medicine chest in your bathroom to the pantry in your kitchen, and looks at problematic storage issues, including CD collections, bookshelves, and seasonal items. A resource guide, helpful hints from fashion industry insiders and leaders, and sidebars give you invaluable information to help you create the closet of your dreams.

Shop Your Closet will inspire you to organize your closets, edit and enhance your wardrobe, and use your storage space to its fullest potential. Unclutter your home, define your personal style, and free yourself from closet nightmares. Turn to chapter 1 and let’s begin.



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BE YOUR  
EDITOR **OWN**





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## CHAPTER I

# Bye-Bye, Pack Rat!

. . . *Hello peace of mind.*

Most of us share the same embarrassing secret—we hoard. Even the *superorganized* among us occasionally hang onto things we don't need—those 24-inch-waist jeans that fit so well three years ago or that dress that you blew your *entire* first paycheck on or the 4-inch-heels (a half size too small!) in purple suede you've never worn but swear you will. The most important step to organizing your closets—and your life—is to lose the habits and ways that make you cling to every little thing. Prior to creating my firm Clos-ette, I have to admit that, yes, even the superorganized me was a pack rat in my other life. I was a bona fide shopaholic who lived to spend every free minute in any type of retail establishment seeking out the latest fashions and hottest clothing trends. When I look back on those days, I think, *Eew, how vulgar and gross!* That unquenchable desire to seek out the new trends for each season has faded away. Today, I edit my wardrobe every four months and look for things I love to integrate with my wardrobe. I buy classically designed garments that I can keep wearing

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over and over again. I never grow tired of them, and I change my look by throwing on a great pair of shoes or carrying a new purse. I look good and I feel good. This new way of keeping my closets organized and easy to shop has helped me keep a tighter hold on my wardrobe: I know what I have and I know where it is. And I've discovered that by keeping things neater and more organized in my closet, I have a clearer head when I get dressed to begin my day. I am no longer stressed about where it is, will it be wearable when I find it, and do I have other pieces that will coordinate with it to complete my outfit. I have more important things to ponder. If you have great pieces for each season that fit and are in good condition, and need to buy only a few select items to enhance what you already own, you won't wake up one day and be caught with a closet full of "Oh my God, what the hell is all of this stuff!" clothing and accessories that you just don't wear.

"Purging is a lifelong commitment," says *GQ* creative director Jim Moore, who has been picking and choosing clothes for the magazine since the early 1980s. And any über-organized person will agree: You've got to realize that editing your wardrobe is a constant process. This has never been truer than in today's world, where people are encouraged to buy everything from socks to scarves in bulk.

## CHANGING YOUR MIND-SET

The first step to major change is desire. The fact that you picked up this book and got past the table of contents is a good sign that you are willing to take the first steps toward an edited wardrobe and an organized closet. It shows that you want to make your wardrobe a fun place to turn to rather than a space that fills you with anxiety.

The next step toward creating an organized, accessible wardrobe is recognizing that change is possible. Letting go of the pack rat inside you is *definitely* possible; we can assure you of that. Think of the most difficult

obstacle you've encountered in your life—a physics class you thought you could never pass, a designer handbag you thought you could never save for, or a huge credit-card bill that you thought you'd never pay off! Whatever the challenge, you were able to face it and overcome it. Similarly, you will be able to stop hanging on to things you don't need.

## GETTING STARTED

To get rid of a mess, sometimes you have to make one. Set aside a weekend—or two evenings after work—to review and edit your wardrobe. Remember, your new mantra is *p-u-r-g-e*. Start by sorting your clothes into three categories: “Throw Away,” “Give Away,” and “Keep.” The damaged-beyond-repair—a top that's missing most of its sequins, pants you burned with an iron, anything torn that cannot be repaired—should go into the “Throw Away” pile. No ifs, ands, or buts. The “Give Away” pile should contain anything that's out of style, too small, or (lucky for you!) too big. Donate these items to your local charity shop or clothing drive, consign them to a used-clothing boutique or vintage-clothing store, or give them to a friend. (See chapter 3, “The CDC: Consignment, Donation, and Collecting,” for more information on donating versus consigning and the advantages of each.) “The Keep” pile should, of course, contain items that you have worn within the last year and that you will continue to wear.



BYE-BYE, PACK RAT!

## DECONSTRUCTING THE PACKRAT PSYCHE

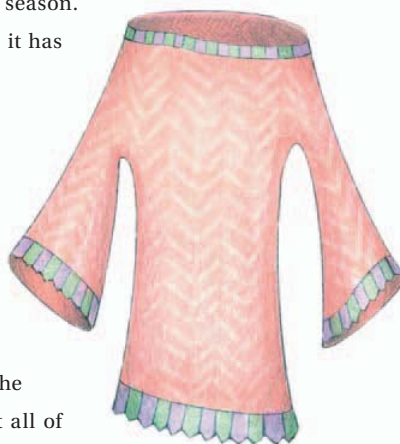
PACKRAT MANTRA	THOUGHT REPLACEMENT	ADVICE FROM THE PROS
"Just in case."	Out with the old to make room for the new!	Make space to take in new ideas! —AMY ASTLEY, EDITOR, TEEN VOGUE
"What if it comes back in style?"	Make room for what you need now, not what you wore back then.	If you haven't worn it in two years, get rid of it! —WENDY CLURMAN, FORMER VOGUE FASHION DIRECTOR
"I might need this some time down the road."	I probably won't need it, and if I do it can always be replaced.	Sentimentality is bad for the wardrobe. —MIGUELINA, DESIGNER
I'll throw it away later.	Later could mean three weeks, three years, or three decades! Get rid of it now.	Replace "later" with "now" when it comes to the wardrobe. —ALVIN VALLEY, DESIGNER

Sometimes it is difficult to decide what items should be placed in which pile. If this is the case, asking a friend to assist you can help. The key to enlisting a friend-editor is to make certain not to ask anyone who will cause you great emotional duress during this important editing exercise (your brutally honest best friend, your mom, your boyfriend or girlfriend, or anyone else who will make you want to strangle them when they squint their eyes and say, “Hmmm, you look kind of pudgy in that . . .”). Instead, choose a friend who knows your lifestyle and your personality, who you think has good personal style, and who can make sure that you’re not going to hang on to an ill-fitting dress just because it’s black or you got it on sale.

People cling to clothing and other items for many different reasons, and many think: *Why do I have all this stuff, and how will I be able to let go of it?* The reality is that once you begin to purge your closet of clothing you’re not using, you’ll be able to think more freely and feel incredibly unburdened by clutter. “Editing my wardrobe is something I have always found very hard,” says Emilia Fanjul Pfeifler, president, EF Communications. “Lately, I try not to buy very trendy clothes and instead, I opt for items that work season to season. Generally, if I don’t wear something for a year, it has got to go.”

## CATALOGUE YOUR WARDROBE

Once you’ve edited sufficiently, take a formal inventory of the items you do have using Clos-ette’s inventory sheet as a guide. (Check page 149 of the Resources section at the back of the book for a copy of this sheet.) List all of



BYE-BYE, PACK RAT!

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your sweaters, pants, suits, jackets, outerwear, gym/active wear, dresses, skirts, shoes, and boots by material and color. Although this task may seem a bit daunting, the result is worth the effort—an official, complete inventory of your wardrobe. This will also bring to your attention shopping habits that will need to be addressed: Are you buying too many black turtleneck sweaters or too many button-down shirts? Another benefit will be the emergence of your overall style: Do you own mostly casual or classic clothes and want to be slightly more current with the trends? Or do you tend to purchase more dressy clothes and lack more casual attire? Either way, assessing what you own—and actually writing it down on an ongoing basis—will set you on the right track and keep you organized and wardrobe informed.



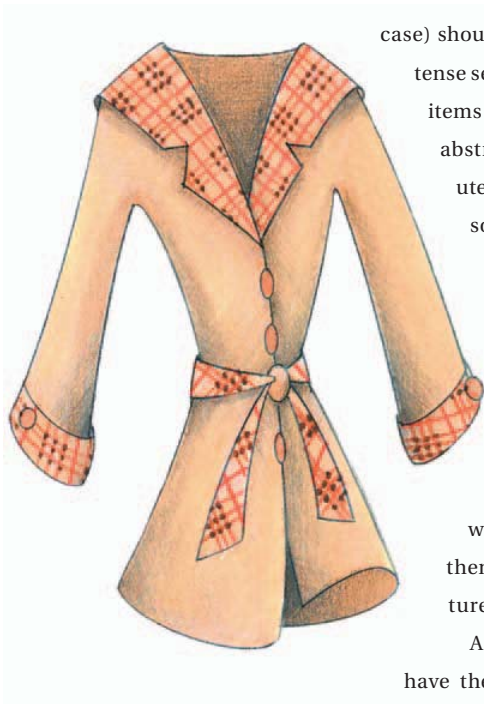
After you've recorded your clothing inventory, decide how to store it and where it will be placed. (For information about storing and specific questions about what should be hung or folded, please refer to chapter 7, "To Hang and to Fold.")

### EMOTIONAL TIES

We're not talking men's neckwear here—what we mean is those ties that keep you bound to things that you will most likely never, ever wear. Do you have trouble getting rid of old T-shirts because they remind you of your college days? Or old pairs of jeans because they remind you of a special someone, even when they don't fit? Or a certain bridesmaid's dress from your friend's wedding that maybe you can cut down one day for a cocktail dress? Certain hang-ups (or "hang-ons," in this

**top five  
tips for  
cleaning  
out your  
closet**

- 1.** Leave yourself ample time to really review each garment carefully and to complete the task.
- 2.** Have plenty of large trash bags available for throw-away items. Make sure to remove the bags from your home once you've filled them, close them securely, and dispose of them in a proper fashion.
- 3.** Inventory whatever you decide to donate or consign. Make two copies (one for your records and one to include as a packing list with your donation). Make certain that these items are clean and properly packed for easy transportation.
- 4.** Sentimental items, such as christening gowns, wedding dresses, and so forth, should be wrapped in acid-free tissue and archivally stored in an acid-free box. Do not hang sentimental items with your daily wardrobe, as this will cause confusion and may damage your prized heirlooms.
- 5.** Discard all dry cleaner's plastic and plastic bags; don't keep them in your closet.



case) should be eliminated. But if you're prone to intense separation anxiety, allow yourself one or two items to cling to and weed out the others. Sound abstract? Let's take those college tees for a minute: They're beaten up, ratty, some too big, some too small, but you *love* them. The good thing is that T-shirts don't take up a lot of space, so pare your collection down to your favorite four, fold them, and store them in a drawer or on a closet shelf. As you grow more accustomed to the merits of editing your wardrobe, chances are you'll allow yourself to part with them later and enjoy reminiscing about them as you look through photo albums at pictures of you wearing those favorite tees.

And let's face it—many of us simply don't have the space to hang on to large quantities of things we don't wear. I know I don't; my apartment has one minuscule closet. The average urban apartment is usually smaller than the living rooms of our parents' homes in the suburbs and, if we're lucky, contains one very small closet. So unless you're living in a large or huge multiroom apartment complete with more closets and storage space than you could have ever imagined, storing a coat collection, ski pants pile, and a linen stack may cause you a great deal of grief; they just take up so much darn space! Edit those piles. The more realistic you are about your constraints—emotionally and spatially—the more likely you are to establish a successful, useful, and wearable wardrobe.



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