

Stylish Solutions

Keeping Spring Clean with a Mudroom

By Ann McDonald



This mudroom has incorporated a small powder room off to the side and closed doors to hide messes. While wonderful from an aesthetic perspective, consider how your family lives. Will doors hide the very things you need to find or will they keep you sane because you don't want to look at the mess day to day? Your choice. Photos bigstock.com

This month I wanted to share some inside information on one of the most beloved rooms in the suburban home: the mudroom. As spring rounds the corner, many of us are looking at tidying areas of our garages, starting the beloved spring clean or just rethinking how we would like to function as the weather lightens up a bit.

Here are some tips on what you can include or consider when remodeling your beloved mudroom – whether it's for a small, medium or ideal option.

First, the small to non-existent space. I understand this, because it is my living truth. I had no mudroom. With two boys who were deeply into sports, a husband who did a lot of coaching on muddy fields, three dogs and me with a penchant for hiking, I would have loved to have had a separate mudroom, especially during the growing years, but it never happened in our suburban Orinda home. Then I had an epiphany.

First, I looked at our front hall off the main entry and I tore out the closet completely. Yes, completely. No entry closet. I can hear the screams now, but stay with me for a

minute. There is hope, and a clean space, on the other side of this action. With the closet gone, I put three-pronged, sturdy hooks in its place. The express purpose was to train our messy family, me included, to hang up their (my) clothes in their (my) actual closets. What a concept!

These hooks worked. Because the space is small, once they were full, they were full. I lost fewer coats and shoes. Our umbrellas now sit in a nice stand on the front porch. The front hall is actually tidy!

Second, I swapped out simple entry tables for chests of drawers in the front hall. The drawers hide what needs to be out of sight: stamps, letter openers, dog leashes and more. With a bit more storage than your typical console table, this is a great storage solution. So good, in fact, that when our oldest went to college, he took one of the chests with him!

Next, the medium space. Here we often find clients have a “back hall” or smaller area to handle some built-ins but not necessarily enough space to add all the extras. When that happens, we go the built-in route. Less dust around pesky tables or chests, a bit easier to design for ac-

tual needs of specific family members.

Many clients like the concept of separate storage spaces for each member of the family. Much like the traditional ski locker or sports locker, these are wonderful ways to encourage those you live with to place items where they will be found when necessary.

I love this look. For shoe storage in drawers, however, consider an open weave face or metal grate face so the smells dissipate and removable washable trays in the bottom so water, mud and dirt don't compromise the wood cabinets. The cost is more, but it is well worth it for lifestyle.

Now, the fun part. Let's imagine for a minute that budget was not an issue and space was available in droves. What kind of ideal mudroom would you design? With a large-scale space, here are some items we have included in designs past:

- A “double-double” Dutch door
- Additional washer and dryer hidden inside built-ins with lift table
- Round table and chairs where delivery people can relax while waiting
- Built-ins for placing and storing packages
- Floral cutting sink with metal counters
- Large-scale tile floors
- Boot trays
- Racks and hooks for coats
- Small powder room
- Television, and more

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One nice thing about using closed doors is the option of having a bar for hanging clothes and linens. This is especially useful if you have a dry cleaner that delivers. Things can arrive in the back door and be separated easily before heading to the proper closet.