

**BACK-TO-SCHOOL MEANS...**

# TIME TO TACKLE HOME PROJECTS



Ah, the sweet, sweet sound of a silent house. There's more beauty about the end of summer than just looking forward to the fiery hues of autumn leaves, and its name is free time. Once the hustle and bustle of the summer months has subsided, the kids have once again boarded the bus and the dust has finally settled, realization dawns: it's time to get things done while you have the chance.



## Orchestrate Some Organization

Life is messy, and more so when busy schedules find the family hastily leaving items around the house with no real sense of how to put things "away." Tidying up requires having an

organizational structure to begin with, and one of the best places to start is in the bedroom. With your newfound free time, begin going through dresser drawers and closets and determining if there are any items that could be donated. While you're at it, step back and take stock of how clothes are stored. Are all dresses grouped together or mixed in with other items? Are all of your jeans neatly stacked in a single drawer or strewn throughout? Designating definite storage spots makes it easier to find the specific clothing article you're looking for without having to dig through your entire wardrobe. While the kids are out of the house, take advantage of the opportunity to do the same for their clothing collections, and hopefully, the seed of a good habit will be planted.

The kitchen is often the busiest room of the house, becoming a study center, food prep area and some even doubling as an informal dining room. This means organization is that much more important. Taking the time to make your kitchen the most efficient space it can be will pay dividends later, when you're busy functioning as taxi driver for after-school sports, head chef and homework helper. Clean off the kitchen table to ensure there's study space. Create a command center with a communal calendar to keep track of everyone's schedules and activities. Mount cubbies for storage of supplies, iPads, school papers, backpacks and more.

Spots that are easily overlooked and often accumulate clutter are the garage, basement and attic of your home. By going through these areas when the kids are clear of the house, you can more easily determine what can be donated or disposed of without the guilt trips and tears of kids who think their childhood stroller should be cherished for eternity or the grumbles of a spouse who can't bear to part with dusty memorabilia that hasn't been seen in years. By tackling these areas without interruption, you'll make surprising progress and likely find more storage space than you realized you had.

## Maintenance Madness

No one loves maintenance, but that doesn't mean it doesn't have to be done. Remember the mountains of laundry that seemingly never shrink? They can now, and there's no better feeling than knowing all of the laundry is done and put away for once. Though the cycle always begins again, periodically taking the time to get it all done means future loads won't be quite so cumbersome. While you're tackling the tide of clothing, consider also washing curtains, which can accumulate allergens, dust and dander over time.

Cleaning can continue with washing the windows—not everyone's favorite task, but a rewarding one once they're crisp and clear. In the same vein, steam cleaning carpets, especially in high traffic areas, is a chore that will not only brighten sections dulled by dirt, but will also extend the life of your carpet, which can be an expensive floor covering to replace. Is your oven window beginning to look more like a door? Break out the elbow grease and give it a good scrubbing, or run the simple self-cleaning mode that most modern ovens feature.

Bigger projects, like painting and replacing doors and windows are also prime for this time. Painting is often put off because it takes time to properly prep, then apply multiple coats and let them dry before kids get handsy with the work you just painstakingly did. With even just one full day to yourself, you can start early and easily have the project complete (or at least dry enough to the touch) before the bus pulls up after school. Door and window replacement, unless you're extremely handy and want to do it yourself, can be scheduled with a local, reputable company who can complete the task in a timely manner with minimal headaches for the homeowner. After all, it is their business.



One of the last items to be tackled is likely so because it's outside the actual living area: landscaping. Winterizing your garden, splitting perennials, cleaning up sticks and debris, mulching and more can be done during this time, when the temperature and weather are conducive to the task. Don your gardening gloves and put on a fun playlist, and the time will fly by.



## Channel Your Internal Interior Designer

While every parent loves being the proud recipient of a child's artwork, there's only so much fridge door real estate. Why not create a dedicated gallery wall to display their creations in all their glory for family and guests to appreciate? To give it a true studio feel, paint a single focus wall white or a light, unobtrusive color for gallery-like contrast. The kids will love it, and you'll love no longer looking for the fridge like Columbus in search of the New World.

That room you've wanted to redecorate for the last five years? Do it, and do it now. Pounce on the opportunity to make your vision reality, even if it's something as simple as rearranging the furniture in the family room to fit the flow of daily life better. If your furniture has seen better days and it's within the budget to replace it, this is the

ideal time, when deliverymen won't have to sidestep small ones as they maneuver your new pieces through doorways and around other items delicately.

If you're looking to really get down and dirty with redecorating, start from the bottom—literally. Replacing flooring is an impactful way to change the look of any room, and with no one home, it can be done quickly and without hassle. You'll have time to get any furniture out of the way, and whether you're DIYing it or delegating, it's often a task that can be completed well within a day if you're choosing laminate or carpeting. And, there's nowhere to go but up. With flooring replaced (and possibly even some painting done), you've got a fresh palate to work with, whether that means actually replacing all of your furniture or simply securing new decorative items like wall art, lamps, throw rugs, pillows, candles and more.

While it might seem like summer flew by fast, the school year does so even quicker. Make sure you maximize the chance to change things for the better within your home, because before you know it, you'll be squarely in the middle of next summer vacation.