

Sports equipment storage ideas offered by three expert designers

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For a dose of style, use colorful woven baskets rather than typical plastic hampers or laundry bins. Just make sure the youngest kids can easily reach their items.

“Once you train yourself to this habit, it will be a natural,” Schuneman says, and the stress of searching for a team jersey before a game will be history. The key is sticking to the system and putting things in their place.

CHOOSE ONE LOCATION FOR GEAR

You don’t need a huge space for sports gear, and it doesn’t have to be in or near a child’s bedroom. “Often people are challenged for space,” Burnham says. Any spot works: “It can be a little area under the stairs or one area of your entryway,” as long as it’s dedicated to sports stuff.

One option is revamping part of your garage, Burnham says. Rather than using plastic storage bins and old boxes, outfit this space with vintage metal containers refurbished with fresh paint, or large baskets with lids. The summer sports season “can be a great reason to give your garage a facelift,” Burnham says, using storage that is sturdy but attractive.

Or spend a Saturday cleaning out an entryway closet, then add hooks and baskets for sports items. You may have more space available than you think.

GET CREATIVE WITH CABINETS

There are many storage options designed specifically for sporting goods and kids’ items. But Flynn suggests thinking more broadly. His favorite creative solution, he says, “always solicits an ‘Are you kidding?’ response.”

“I usually pick up pre-fab kitchen cabinets from big box retailers, then install them as storage solutions for kids’ rooms,” Flynn says. “They come in all different sizes, many the ideal depth for basketballs or soccer balls, and many in excellent heights, tall enough for baseball bats or hockey sticks.”

“My favorite is Ikea’s Abstrakt in high-gloss red. I usually adorn the cabinet door fronts with large towel rings instead of drawer pulls. This way they add that playful, unexpected, kid’s room touch, and kids can actually lay their soccer socks out on them, or their freshly washed hand towels,” Flynn says. “For a 6-year-old boy in Los Angeles, I installed three of them side-by-side on a wall below a window, instantly adding concealed storage for his sports gear. Plus, it doubles as a homework area, since I added a countertop to it.”

COMBINE SEATING WITH STORAGE

All three designers suggest investing in seating with built-in storage, like a bench with cubbies underneath.

“In a bedroom redesign I did for two young sisters in Atlanta, I had a window seat outfitted with deep drawers, which can hold everything the girls need,” Flynn says, including tennis gear.

Schuneman hunts for vintage trunks to use this way. “A trunk in a mudroom or entryway can double as a chic bench to be able to take on and off those cleats,” he says. “If you have multiple items or sports, and want them separate, try getting smaller square trunks in varying shades and place them next to each other. It’s a great way to have an easy color-coded system, without

it feeling like a kids’ playroom.”

“A vintage barrel or ceramic pot,” he says, can “house your tall items, like baseball bats, tennis racquets and lacrosse sticks, next to the bench.”

PUT SPORTS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Sometimes, celebrating the presence of all this gear is better than hiding it. Flynn is a fan of “open solutions, whether with hooks, shadowboxes or shelves.”

Schuneman agrees: “Hooks are essential. No one wants to hang up their coats, but hooks on the wall are an easy way to throw your uniforms, hoodies and track jackets up. Give everyone their own hook with their initial on them to make the process go smoothly.”

All three designers suggest seeking out vintage school lockers or gym lockers, which can be found online at eBay and elsewhere. Real lockers bring “a retro schoolhouse feel,” Schuneman says, and are “incredibly useful. Each kid can have a locker and even the parents, too!”

If a room is “going to be

full of uniforms, cleats and gear, I run with the preppy theme by bringing in vintage wire baskets, plaid bowling bags, school banners and vintage schoolhouse pieces to play it up,” Flynn says. “This way, it becomes an obvious part of the design but in a playful, designer-caliber manner.”

If “being a sports parent is who you are right now,” Burnham says, “there’s no reason to apologize for it.” Instead of hiding lacrosse sticks and baseball bats, “get a great looking umbrella stand” and keep those items right by your front door.

“It’s who you are,” Burnham says. “And everybody gets it.”



AP photo

Designer Brian Patrick Flynn created an L-shaped window seat to keep bulky items such as tennis rackets and cheerleading gear neatly organized and easily accessible in a bedroom room shared by two young sisters.

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