

Tis' the Season – Clothing Storage

The change in weather and temperature spurs nature and humans to change, as well. For those in my house, fall weather tells us it's time to change the spring and summer clothes out for our fall and winter ones. With a household of five, this task takes a bit of planning and considerable time. Through research and personal experience, I have acquired some tips and tricks that I thought others may be able to use in their own homes.

Seasonal clothing storage is used for clothes that are not appropriate to the season of the year, such as the tank tops I am packing away for next summer. It could also be for those clothes that are not the right color or style, such as the Halloween sweatshirt that I will put away in a couple of weeks. Planning for this rotation of clothing helps me reduce my clothing expenses because I am able to determine what clothes I have ample amounts of and those that I have in limited number. With three boys as close in age as mine are, keeping track of sizes, quantities, and condition is very important to my clothing budget. Using seasonal clothing storage practices helps me weed out the clothing that needs to be repaired or needs to be thrown away because it is beyond repair. It also helps me determine the quantities I have on hand that will still fit any one of the boys.

At the beginning I have the boys help me with this process by trying clothes on, sorting their clothes out by size, and placing their clothes in one of four piles – ready to wear, ready to store, ready to pass down to younger brother, or ready to send on to their younger cousin. TIP: When we get to the point of placing the clothes we are keeping into storage, I usually tackle that task on my own. It's a lot less stressful for me and I can move more quickly in completing the job!

On the weekends that I am changing clothes from one season to another, I make sure everything that I am putting in seasonal storage has been washed and repaired, if needed. This is why it is important to plan ahead for this process. You need to make sure you have enough time in your schedule to get most, if not all, of the process finished in a single day or weekend. You don't want to risk losing all the work you have done by needing to move the piles before you are ready to store them.

Research shows that it is best to thoroughly rinse the clothes after they are laundered and omit any use of fabric softener prior to placing clothes in storage. You also want to make sure that the clothes are thoroughly dry. Storing damp or wet clothing will invite mildew and mold to set in. With all the laundry done and sorted, I make sure I have collected all the clothing items that are going out of season and add those items to the piles the boys helped me with earlier in the day.

Next, I have to consider what storage area and method provides the best protection depending on the type of garment and the fabric it is made out of. Avoiding areas that are damp or may be exposed to excessive heat is important. Additionally, I need to make sure the storage area is free of fumes. Some areas that may have these concerns and thus, should be avoided include basements, attics, and garages.

Most of my children's clothes, with the exception of the few dress clothes they have, can be stored in large storage containers that have snap on lids or extra trunks or suitcases that are not in use. Clothes that are made from natural fiber such as cotton need to have room to breathe so I am careful not to pack the container too full. It's also a good idea to layer white tissue paper or a clean sheet or pillowcase between the clothes for this purpose. The clothes that are heavier in weight, like jeans, are placed on the bottom with the lighter weight items, like tank tops, are placed near the top. This will put less stress on the light-weight clothes. I fold them differently for storage than I would for their dresser drawer. Folding on the seamlines whenever possible will prevent unwanted creases from setting in the clothes while they are in storage.

One of the final steps I take is to label the container before I put it in the back of their closet. I label the containers by size and season. Labeling the containers

by size helps me determine which storage container to unpack for any one specific child. I also add any "special clothes" to the label. I find this very helpful for identifying where the swimsuits or winter gloves are as I am looking through the containers during the unpredictable temperature swings that Kansas is known for.

Looking ahead to next week's weather forecast, it appears that my weekend will be filled with laundry and storage containers – tis' the season! Good luck with your own household tasks for the fall season and keep living resourcefully!