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# Spring Cleaning: Organizing Travel Gear Made Easy

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Organizing anything in life makes things easier, but this is especially true for travel gear. Nobody loves packing, and you don't want to waste precious time trying to find your travel adapter or your scuba gear. Here, tips on how to store your travel goods—and the products the experts recommend—as well as common storage mistakes to avoid.

## Use Clear Bins





Clear Weathertight Totes THE CONTAINER STORE

“Anything that is not accessed regularly should be contained in clear bins so the contents are visible,” says Shannon Krause, chief operating organizer of [Tidy Nest](#). She explains that [opaque bins](#) invite and hide clutter and usually become repositories for miscellaneous items. Plus, your labeling system has to be spot on if the bin isn’t clear. Otherwise you’ll find yourself unstacking and opening up bins over and over to figure out what they actually contain. “We always use [Weathertight Totes from The Container Store](#) for storage. The sizes are manageable, the contents are visible, and labels adhere easily to them,” says Krause. “The key is to categorize everything first, edit each category, then store what you’re keeping in clear containers with legible labels.”

The Clear Weathertight Totes come in various sizes including 74, 62, 41, and 30 quarts. They protect the contents against moisture, dirt, and bugs. Plus, the latches are supertight, securing the lid to the container and providing an air- and watertight seal. The containers are made from ultra-clear polypropylene, have handled sides, and are stackable.

“We love see-through containers,” says Nancy Meck, owner of [Meck Organizing](#). “We learned that from one of our first clients over 15 years ago when she said, ‘I want everything put away. I just want to see it at the same time.’” Meck points out that clear bins allow you to gauge how full the container is in case you wanted to store more in it or need to replace whatever was inside. Plus, Meck notes, it’s easier to “match” if you need

more containers (and thus looks better when storing and assembling a grouping).

Another good tip? “I suggest to clients that they label clear bins, even if they feel that the contents are obvious,” Carly Adams of [Tidy Revival](#). “This will help their family learn the new systems faster, so everyone can help tidy up.”

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## Mesh That's Sturdy, Yet Sleek



The Elfa system THE CONTAINER STORE

“We like to use wire drawers, like [The Container Store’s Elfa systems](#), for items like sporting and camping equipment, scuba gear, bike helmets, and other travel accessories,” says Krause. These drawers are helpful because you can see the contents and they are easily accessible.”

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The [Wide Start-A-Stack](#) is the most popular Elfa drawer combination. It’s very strong, made from epoxy-bonded steel, so it can handle heavy and bulky gear. The drawers glide smoothly when they open and close. Plus, the mesh makes the contents both visible and accessible while giving the storage unit a sleek, modern look. The fine weave prevents small items from falling through.

“Mesh drawer units are great because they allow you to see your inventory without being too see-through,” says Ría Safford, founder of [RiOrganize](#).

“Mesh is a much more refined look than plastic and helps you create storage in areas where it didn't already exist.”

Adams agrees, noting that mesh drawers are popular for a reason: They are great in high-traffic areas, are cost-effective, and are often part of systems that are customizable to your space. “They’re also great for kids because they can see what’s inside, and the drawers are easy to open and close,” she says. She notes that with any drawer system, depending on what you’re containing, you may or may not also want to consider using drawer dividers to further organize inside each space. Often, the makers of your drawer system have dividers that are specifically designed for those dimensions.

## Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Avoid the “what if” game, says Meck. “What if my first two ski jackets somehow rip, shouldn’t I have a third? What if little Sally’s snorkeling mask strap breaks—don’t we need to store a backup?” Simply have one of everything and replace when needed. This cuts down on clutter and fewer things will need to be stored.
- Not putting away the gear soon after returning home. Notes Meck, it’s super easy to let it sit on the floor, where it can be in the way and cause friction in the household. Plus, you might not know where to find it when you pack for the next trip.
- Don’t store things in the wrong place. “We don’t recommend storing anything that is fabric in non-temperature-control, such as an attic or carport,” says Meck. A temperature-controlled, dry place is ideal. In terms of what room to store it in, Meck suggests that if you travel with the gear, say, at least once a month, put it somewhere that is easy to reach but out of the way. (A closet is a good option.)
- Not cleaning the gear when you return from a trip. “Scuba accessories, beach items, or camping gear that are not properly cleaned before they go back into storage can result in mold, or even worse... critters,” says Krause.

- Travel-sized products from hotels and flights do not need to come home with you. “Very rarely do they get used again,” says Krause. “Most often they stay hidden in a suitcase side pocket and get thrown out three years later.
- Don’t overthink it. “We all have our go-to items that make our travels easier, but if you find that you’re frequently bringing travel items on trips that you don’t end up using, let them go,” says Adams. You’ll have more fun on vacation if you’re not constantly sifting through “travel clutter”—those items that you packed because it seemed like a good idea, but you don’t actually use.

**Bottom line:** “Traveling comes with enough stressors and you don’t want the finding of your items you need to pack to be one of them,” says Safford. The more you have your items micro-organized, the easier it will be to pack for your next trip.

*Check out my [website](#).*



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