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35 Affordable Ways to Create Space

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METICULOUSLY
PLANNED BUILT-INS
ARE THE SECRET OF
THIS COMPACT URBAN
HOME'S SUCCESS

APARTMENT DWELLERS, especially in space-starved New York City, must almost by necessity become experts at storage. But Sara Jazayeri, a designer and architect who lives in the city's Riverdale section, practically has a Ph.D. in the subject. Her clever built-ins and ingenious use of every inch mean that her compact three-bedroom apartment, totaling less than 1,600 square feet, feels spacious and airy.

When Jazayeri and her family of four began looking for a place two years ago, she asked her agent to show her only ugly or outdated spaces, so that she could remake her home exactly the way she wanted it, without paying for someone else's renovation. This unit, in the same 1970s high-rise the family was already living in, "was completely covered in mirrors—in the kitchen, on the ceilings, everywhere," she says.



HOMEOWNER SARA JAZAYERI, above, wanted to create "a room my teenage son, Daniel, couldn't mess up," so she installed wall-to-wall cabinets and shelves, as well as drawers in his closet, and mounted the TV on the wall. The decor is simple and sophisticated so the space can become a guest room when he leaves for college.



steel appliances and frosted-glass upper cabinets, help lighten a narrow kitchen. Glass tiles in shades of green on the backsplash repeat the pattern of the slate-like porcelain floor tile. Silestone counters are easy to maintain.

“Demolition was the most expensive part of the project because it was so difficult and dangerous to remove all of them.”

Jazayeri reconfigured the space slightly, closing off one opening to the master bedroom to create a walk-in closet; doubling the storage in the kitchen by turning it from a galley into a U-shape; and giving up the original master bedroom to her four-year-old son, Darian, so it could become a combination playroom-bedroom and his toys wouldn't migrate all over the apartment.

At the same time, she built in, tucked in, and concealed storage wherever she could. In the master bedroom, she balanced an oddly placed niche in one wall by incorporating it into an entire wall of cabinetry that encloses a TV, drawers for accessories, and her husband's clothes closet. She made the most of wasted space in the hallway by fitting one wall with narrow waist-high cabinetry (“you don't notice it if it's not at eye level”), picture ledges for family photos, and a slender desk. Jazayeri turned a plain-Jane wall (which encloses the building's gas pipes and could not be removed) between the kitchen and entry into a focal point with the addition of an electric fireplace sheathed in gorgeous limestone tile. But even here, she slipped in a base of deep wooden file drawers that serve as banquettes on either side of the hearth.

Jazayeri, whose firm, Studio 360, offers both architectural and design services, found workarounds for even the toughest apartment bugaboos. She cleverly placed the refrigerator in front of an unused door in the kitchen and installed cabinets around the

Small spaces appear larger if elements are symmetrical

4 great touches

1 Because the electric oven was 16 inches narrower than the cooktop above it, Jazayeri made the most of even that sliver of space by having 3-inch-wide pull-out cabinets made for either side of the oven. They're just deep enough to hold pasta and cracker boxes. Similar, taller pullouts flank the refrigerator.

2 Installing an electric fireplace with a gray limestone tile surround added drama to the entryway. The varying thicknesses of the tiles create texture, depth, and subtle color gradations. Below the fireplace, deep file drawers for paperwork are secured with latches that require knowing the “trick” to open them—a child-proofing aid.

3 Along the hall to the bedrooms, Jazayeri built in narrow cabinetry (for things such as cleaning supplies and extra toiletries), which wraps around a corner to become a slender writing desk for guests. “Because there's no visible hardware,” she says, “it doesn't read as storage.”

4 An awkwardly placed niche in the bedroom became a TV armoire with drawers for accessories below; Jazayeri created a parallel cabinet (not shown) for her husband's clothes, then applied moldings to the space in between to mimic a full wall of cabinetry.





A NEUTRAL PALETTE, with shots of color in accessories, helps create the calm and airy shell Sara Jazayeri envisioned. A long, clean-lined, slubby-textured tweed sofa in the living room, above, is enlivened with orange and blue pillows. In the master bath, right, a bedside chest was adapted as a vanity by adding a marble top. Botticino marble tiles in different sizes, some set on the diagonal, cover the walls, shower, and floor, lending visual interest..



exploring space: a pro's pointers

- **KEEP FAVES FRONT & CENTER.** "You probably wear only ten to twelve things regularly; put the rest in the back of your closet or a separate closet. Your closet will look neater, and fewer options mean less stress."
- **BANISH CLUTTER.** "My younger son's toys are tucked away on shelves inside a closet with sliding doors. When he opens the doors, he can find all his toys, but we don't have to see them."
- **GO CUSTOM.** "If you find a reasonable carpenter, made-to-order built-ins often don't cost more than good ready-mades, and will be less intrusive and more useful."
- **DON'T SLEEP ON IT.** "Under-bed storage isn't healthy—that area never gets cleaned properly."
- **THINK SHALLOW (& NARROW).** "Items at the back of deep shelves and cabinets get lost because you can't see them. Shallow shelves or pullouts are easier to organize."
- **LABEL BOXES & BASKETS.** "I like to organize items in boxes or baskets, but it's important to label them so that you can find things quickly. We do it for children, but it works well for adults, too."
- **STORE HIGH (& LOW).** "Don't leave open space above your kitchen cabinets—it just invites dust. Extend cabinets to the ceiling where possible and keep rarely used items up high."
- **PLAN SOME FREE SPACE.** "Don't fill up every inch now or soon you won't have enough storage."

—Designer/Homeowner Sara Jazayeri

fridge to make it look built in. "Symmetry helps a small space appear larger," says Jazayeri. "It's familiar; your eye knows what to expect." Aluminum and frosted glass-front upper cabinets help relieve the heaviness of the wood, and their reflective quality brings light into the narrow kitchen, opening up the room.

Small moves helped maximize space without costing much money: Turning the toilets in each bathroom 90 degrees, for example, freed up more wall space for the vanities without moving the plumbing. "Moving a sink is not a big deal, but moving a toilet is," says Jazayeri. Similarly, in the kitchen, she was careful not to move gas lines or plumbing. She then had more money in her budget for luxurious materials, such as marble tile in the bath. "In a small space, the focus should be on quality, not quantity."

Jazayeri opted for environmentally safe paints from Benjamin Moore, and eco-friendly bamboo floors throughout—a choice that lightened up the apartment and enhanced the sense of spaciousness. "Life is chaotic and stressful enough in New York," she says. "Your home should feel serene, calm, and uncluttered." ■

A bedroom with a king-size bed, a walk-in closet, and framed artwork. The room features a warm, yellowish wall and a white ceiling with a decorative crown molding. A king-size bed is the central focus, covered with a white sheet and a light green blanket. The bed is adorned with a large white pillow and a smaller, striped, tasseled pillow. To the left of the bed is a round wooden nightstand with a vase of flowers, a bowl of fruit, and a book. A walk-in closet is visible on the far left. Three framed pieces of artwork are mounted on the wall above the bed. A pendant light hangs from the ceiling.

A WARMER SHADE OF WHITE
than that used elsewhere in the home colors the master bedroom's walls. Though Jazayeri scaled most furnishings small to keep the apartment feeling open, here she indulged in a king-size bed with crisply tailored linens for a resortlike look. Her walk-in closet, created by closing up a doorway, is to the left.

“The secret to a happy marriage is separate **closets.**”