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SETTING UP A DROP ZONE

One of my favorite organizing tools is one of the easiest to set up. It's called a "drop zone" - a high traffic area in the house where you and your family or roommates store essential daily items, schedules and to-do lists, along with keys and coats.

First, designate an area that is closest to your busiest entryway (this could be in the front or back of the house).

Second, divide the area so each person has their own slice of the drop zone. If you have the room, cubbies or lockers work well for keeping individual items separate.

If you don't have enough room to install lockers, provide hooks for each person to hang up their coats and place a small bin on the floor beneath the hook to catch smaller items, such as bags, hats, gloves, books, etc. Get creative - personalize the hooks for each member of the household. There are hooks with different colors, shapes, even ones with fun frames and decorative accents in the shape of animals or sports equipment.

Next, place an in-box tray on a small table or shelf that can be used for papers, like permission slips that need parent signature, homework or important mail. This would also be a good place to have a shared whiteboard calendar and cork board with different color markers for each person.

Since we live in the rainy northwest, a waterproof mat in this area makes a convenient resting place for wet shoes and umbrellas.

If you're entering the house from a garage, an equipment rack or hooks by the door can also serve as an organizational drop zone.

The garage often becomes a catchall for odds and ends. Don't neglect this important area of your home! If it has become disorganized, watch for some helpful hints on the [Innovatively Organized Blog](#).

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