

good morning!



Placing rolled towels in a niche is a convenient way to add color. The double towel rack is from Moen's Wembley™ Collection.

photo courtesy of Moen®

Start the Day Right in an Efficient Bath

What does your bath look like on a typical morning? A place for everything and everything in its place? Or, a floor covered with wet towels and dirty clothes and a countertop cluttered with hair products, lotions, cosmetics and a tangle of cords? If the second description fits your bath – or your children's bath – this article is for you. While today's families have more products and appliances to deal with in their baths, they also have access to new features and better design to accommodate them.



VANITIES:

Historically, vanities were typically 30 - 32 inches tall. Today, they often range anywhere from 34 to 42 inches. Not only are the expanded heights more comfortable for average to tall folks, they also create added storage possibilities – particularly extra drawers.

Lori Carroll, president of Lori Carroll & Associates, an award-winning design team in Tucson, Arizona, often staggers vanity heights to provide interest and flexibility. “This is especially helpful for couples who have a substantial height difference,” she notes.

“Varying depths can also be used effectively, especially in smaller baths,” Carroll continues. “For instance, a designer may bump out the middle/sink section of the vanity and flank it with shallower cabinets. This offers a striking focal point and maximum storage in limited space. In smaller baths, I’ve also used a wide, shallow vanity with a European sink that actually extends past the cabinetry. This allowed me to run the vanity wall to wall with a clean look and without cutting into the room too much.

“Textured stainless steel doors are another fashionable way to break up cabinetry.

“But that’s only the beginning. Not long

ago, most bathroom vanities had a couple drawers flanking the sink and two to three doors that opened to reveal a big, dark cavern. Today, we minimize this cave by incorporating a column of drawers and including some organizational items behind the vanity doors.”

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Moen kitchen and bath expert Stephanie Young agrees. “Many of the newer kitchen amenities have traveled to the bathroom. We have lazy Susans for cleaning supplies, tilt-out trays under sinks for combs and brushes, and drawer inserts to keep cosmetics and skin care products organized. A pull-out unit with several shelves can make gels and lotions very accessible. Even the backs of vanity

doors can be more efficient – with a wire basket attached to store a blower dryer and curling iron or a wood shelf for bottles of shampoo and mouthwash.”

Carroll uses roll-out inserts wherever possible. “A roll-out with a deep basket or bin on top of it for dirty clothes can eliminate having a hamper in view. In fact, it can look like a set of drawers on the outside of the cabinet.”

VERTICAL STORAGE:

Above vanity storage is also new and improved. Appliance garages have migrated from the kitchen to the bath. “But I’m seeing fewer tambour doors, which sometimes had problems sticking or holding up,” comments Young. “More often, the garage has a pull-up door, often on the side facing the mirror – rather than the front of the cabinet. Depending on local codes, it may have a plug-in plate inside the cabinet. Deep drawers are also doubling as appliance garages.”

“We often install a storage pillar that’s six to eight inches deep between the lavs, or we flank both sides of the mirror with tall cabinets,” Carroll remarks. “In smaller baths, where a lot of cabinetry may seem overwhelming, we may use lighter stains or frosted glass on the doors. Frosted glass is nice because it provides some privacy, while still reflecting light.”

SELF-STANDING ADDITIONS:

"In addition to furniture pieces being used for vanities, they're being brought in for extra storage," notes Chris Kroll, an interior designer in Omaha, Nebraska, who specializes in organizing and space planning. "A small bachelor's chest works well for extra candles, soaps, towels and wash clothes. For a simpler, cleaner look, Pottery Barn offers white, stackable cubes with drawers, open shelving or glass doors.

SPECIFIC STORAGE:

For towels, hooks have become very popular. "Hooks have some advantages over towel bars," says Carroll. "If multiple family members use a bath, providing individual hooks for each person's towel requires less wall space than a series of towel bars. But it's best not to hang towels on the back of the bath door; they may not get enough air to dry if the door touches the shower stall or a wall when it's open.

"I like to roll up extra towels and place them in open niches – perhaps around the tub or in baskets underneath the vanity. It keeps them handy while bringing colors into the space."

Larger baths offer the possibility of linen closets filled with fresh towels. Carroll advises

homeowners to request adjustable shelves and space them fairly closely. "Just as you don't want to have to dig through a tall pile of sweaters in your closet, you want to keep stacks of towels rather short.

"Keeping a closet full of towels fresh in a humid bathroom can be a challenge," Carroll goes on, "so it's important to ensure the door to the linen closet seals tightly to keep humidity out."

"Draping towels over the rungs of a rustic library ladder is a popular treatment in the Southwest," Young observes. "I've also seen iron wine-bottle holders used to display rolled towels. And there are some new innovations in towel bars. Moen's Vestige line of bath fixtures includes a double towel rod. Because the front rod is a little lower than the back rod, it allows homeowners to use one lighter and one darker

towel in the same color or two accent colors. I've also seen a combination shower curtain rod/towel rod on the market."

Previously, medications were often stored in a recessed cabinet with a mirrored door under a strip of lights. Because medications keep best in a cool, dry environment, some designers recommend storing them outside the bathroom – perhaps on an upper shelf in a linen closet (out of the reach of young children).



OPPOSITE LEFT & CENTER: Sterling's Stor-ganize By-pass Bath and Shower Doors come with a series of removable shelves and two hooks.

photos courtesy of Sterling, www.SterlingPlumbing.com

OPPOSITE RIGHT: Hooks have become popular in the bath, partly because they use less wall space than a towel bar. Shown here, Moen's Parkview™ Collection.

photo courtesy of Moen®

LEFT & CENTER: Lori Carroll's innovative bathroom peninsula earned an award in the National Kitchen and Bath Association's 2006 contest.

photos courtesy of Lori Carroll & Associates

For those who prefer to keep them in the bath, Carroll suggests moving them away from the lights. "Using a vanity drawer with a spice insert is a nice way to keep multiple pill bottles tidy, while a narrow pullout with a couple of shelves may work better for an assortment of pills, first aid supplies and liquid medications (such as hydrogen peroxide, rubbing alcohol or cold remedies). If there is even the possibility of small children visiting the home, some type of locking device should be installed.

DISPLAY AREAS:

Today's designers give baths personality by displaying practical and decorative items – everything from extra towels, pretty candles and bottles of bubble bath to collections of artwork, starfish or colored glassware. Recessed niches are carved out between wall studs and outfitted with wood or glass shelves. Tub alcoves often include a bank of built-in shelves and cubbies. Or, a shelf made from crown molding may be installed near the ceiling.

come with two built-in hooks and a series of removable shelves that you can actually take out and wash in the dishwasher."

CURBING CHAOS:

With so many options to make your bath less cluttered and more convenient, there's no excuse for bedlam in the bath. Curb the chaos so you and your family can start the day looking and feeling your best! ■



"There are some very attractive medicine cabinets available that can be placed on another wall, away from the vanity lights. Valli & Valli makes a cabinet with curved stainless steel panels that almost looks like a modern sculpture."

Traditional medicine cabinets are sometimes stacked on top of each other to create a tall storage unit ideal for medications, hair products, cosmetics, cotton balls and Q-tips. If a recessed cabinet is placed on a side wall, the door can be camouflaged with a framed print in the same way glass doors are used over a vanity.

Whether you like to keep a separate set of cleaning supplies in each bathroom, or you rely on a single set you transport from bath to bath, determines how best to store them. Those who carry cleansers to other areas will appreciate having everything in a caddy with a handle. Otherwise, a revolving carousel or shelves on a vanity door make them easy to access. For homes with young children, Carroll suggests using plastic bins with locked zip ties through the handles.

MAXIMIZING SPACE:

In large and small baths, designers are finding new ways to make the most of the space available. Carroll came up with an award-winning vanity peninsula for a client with a 16 x 20 bath (shown on page 5). A mirror supported by a stainless steel bridge divided the peninsula's large stone sink. This arrangement allowed Carroll to include a storage wall with chests of drawers and storage towers with frosted glass and another chest of drawers on the open end of the peninsula.

In less spacious baths, designers may utilize shelving above the toilet or fashion niches for reading material or extra toilet paper within privacy walls. Some enterprising homeowners hang canvas shoe storage panels on the back of the bathroom door to hold brushes, cotton balls, a blower dryer and bath powder.

"We now have shower doors with built-in storage," Young notes. "Sterling's Storganize™ By-pass Bath and Shower Doors

LEFT: Taller vanities mean less bending and more storage.

photo courtesy of Raymond Andreski

CENTER: Linen cabinets often flank vanity mirrors.

RIGHT: Stainless steel cabinetry can provide a striking focal point.

photo courtesy of Lori Carroll & Associates



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