

10 Bookshelf Organization Ideas Every Book Lover Needs

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By

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Jenifer McNeil Baker for Maestri Studio

Whether you're an avid book collector or simply want a stylish home for your beloved titles and other shelfie must-haves, a properly organized bookshelf is an important part of any home. There's no rulebook for how a shelf should be organized, but we tapped a few designers for a few of their favorite ideas. From arranging by color to adding other items to the shelves to stacking books horizontally, they dished so you can find a proper home for all of your favorite reads in no time.

Scroll on for 10 designer-approved bookshelf organization ideas that'll have you rearranging your shelves immediately.

Use a Layered Technique



Kelli Boyd for Well + Wonder Artist Collective

Take it from Mollie Creason, founder of Well + Wonder Artist Collective, who arranged this bookshelf, which beautifully balances books with artwork of all kinds, potted plants, and meaningful knick-knacks.

“When it comes to styling bookshelves, a layered approach draws the eye. I always suggest using art to create a unique and sophisticated foundation from which to build,” Creason says. “From there, incorporating special books and unique memorabilia add interest. Don’t be

afraid to mix pieces of varying colors, textures, and sizes to create a warm and inviting look.”
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Organize Your Books by Color



Laura Sumrak for Crystal Nagel Design

Dewey Decimal System, take a backseat. While some people like to organize their library of books by author and others by topic, arranging your books by the color of their cover can create an intentional look.

Designer Crystal Nagel agrees. “For bookshelf styling, I gravitate towards arranging books by color. It’s easier on the eye when colors are grouped together and results in easy visual interest and intrigue. The result is cohesive and elevated,” she says.

Use the Top Shelves for Books and Bottom Ones for Storage



Martin Vecchio Photography for NEAT Method

Bookshelves don't have to be just for books, you know. Think of them as storage solutions for all kinds of life necessities—magazines, toys, you name it. Marissa Hagemeyer, co-founder of NEAT Method, suggests using the top shelves for decorating pieces such as color-coded books, plants, and other accent items. Then, she says, reserve the bottom shelves for heavier pieces and store items that add visual clutter.

“Organize in plain sight by placing bins and baskets on lower shelves to categorize items like toys, files, technology, and crafts,” Hagemeyer says.

Utilize Floating Bookshelves



Sarah Jefferys Design

Overwhelmed at the thought (and cost) of a built-in bookshelf? We understand. While built-ins can create a sophisticated, formal look, custom wood shelves, like the ones Sarah Jefferys, the founder and principal of Sarah Jefferys Design, added to flank this minimalist fireplace—they're just as cohesive but less stuffy and sleeker.

“We wanted to create the feeling of light, floating, and minimal shelves that almost disappear in front of the exposed brick walls,” Jefferys says. “Metal angles are bolted into the brick walls to carry the weight of the shelves with books on them. Bespoke wood shelves are then slid onto the metal angles so no metal is visible and one is left curious how the shelves and heavy books are supported.”

Remove Book Bindings



Rachel Alyse Photography for Koukla Collective

For a more cohesive look to your book collection, Caroline Aycock of Koukla Collective suggests removing the book covers. “The natural color and texture of the book give your shelves a true library feel,” she says. “I never purchase a coffee table book without peeking under the glossy cover to see the natural binding first.”

Break Up the Books With Storage Boxes



John Sutton for Maydan Architects

“Huge libraries can be overwhelming when they are completely full of books, so it’s always nice to break it up visually with some nice design items,” says Mary Maydan, founder and principal of Maydan Architects. That’s what she did in her own family’s playroom.

“One good organization strategy is to incorporate a mixture of shelving and concealed boxes. This set up of concealed storage boxes allowed us to store toys and books of different colors and sizes, without worrying about it looking messy,” she says.

Add Spotlights Above Your Bookshelves



Eric Piasecki Photography for Mendelson Group

To show your beloved books off, add pendants above each floor-to-ceiling bookshelf, as Mendelson Group did here. It's grand, elegant, and practical. Now you can always see where every last book is, even if you have hundreds of them.

Stack Books Horizontally



Jenifer McNeil Baker for Maestri Studio

After a lifetime of visiting libraries, where books are placed vertically, it's only natural to store them that way at home too. Perhaps you want to think again though. For a stylized bookshelf, methodically stack some books horizontally, as Maestri Studio did here. It's intentional, doesn't overload the space, and if you're only stacking a few on top of each other, you can still easily grab whichever book you're looking for.

Create Gaps in Open Shelving



Legeard Studio

Long, continuous open shelves are great. Not-so-continuous open shelves of all lengths, like the ones in this dining room designed by Legeard Studio, are even better, since they add unexpected visual interest. Hanging long, medium, and short open shelves leave gaps that give taller items (like plants and pieces of art) a home and is simply more compelling too.

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Organize With a Twist on a Classic Wedding Rule



Rachel Alyse Photography for Koukla Collective

Caroline Aycock of Koukla Collective has a clever way of organizing her bookshelves. “My favorite way to make sure my shelves feel organized and clean is to follow my adaptation of the classic wedding rule: something old, something clean, something borrowed, and something green,” she says. That way you add character, color, and a bit of life.

24 Living Room Bookshelf Ideas To Inspire You To Grow Your Library