

9 WAYS TO PREVENT EVENING MELTDOWNS

PARENTING

NOVEMBER 1998

**IS YOUR
CHILD
A LATE
BLOOMER?**

**When to worry,
when to relax**

**Answers to
the most-asked
PREGNANCY
QUESTIONS**

Germ Wars

**How to protect
your kids**

A GOOD DAD

**What it really
takes to be one**

**The Year's
Best Toys!**

An Age-by-Age Guide

\$2.95 U.S. / \$3.50 CAN



Maya, 15 months
and ready to play

MESS MAKEOVER

KIDS EQUAL CHAOS. Here's how to get EVERYTHING —toys, books, clothes— under control

A RECENT MORNING AT OUR house: My first-grader can't find her sneakers and is wearing mismatched slippers. Her 9-year-old sister heaps jackets on the floor as she searches for the one she wants. My husband nurses his foot after stepping on a tiny but deadly action figure. And I'm hunting for the kids' backpacks.

"Why can't we get it together?" I wonder.

Pam Gibbard, a professional organizer in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, has a reassuring response: "It's not just you—many homes have changed. Children used to spend more of their time playing outside, and bedrooms were mostly for sleeping and clothes. Now they often play indoors, and they have a lot more toys." ▷

BY DIANE BAKER

HOOKS installed on the inside of the door can hold frequently used items like jackets, hats, or pajamas

WIRE BASKETS that slide out let kids see and get at underwear, socks, and folded clothes. (Out-of-season clothes can go on top.) A good option if hanging clothes only take up half the closet



HANGING RODS can be hard for children to reach. Reserve the higher bar for out-of-season, rarely worn, and to-grow-into clothing. Then install a second, lower one (you can also buy an extender rod that attaches directly to the high rod at housewares stores) so the clothes your child currently wears are at her level

DRESSER (this three-drawer unit is an inexpensive, accessible version) can be moved into the closet for more floor space in bedroom



Clothes & Closets

- Reconsider dressers for small children. "Drawers can be frustrating because kids can't see what's underneath the top layer, and every extra step makes it harder for them," says Sheila McCurdy, owner of Clutter Stop, in Uplands, California. She likes storing preschoolers' clothes in milk crates labeled with pictures of pants, shirts, dresses, and underwear to help youngsters find what they need.
- Create a system for older kids. By kindergarten, when children can handle drawers with ease, use just the ones they can reach, and move up as they grow. Some families organize drawers by activity—play clothes, school clothes, dressy outfits—so kids don't have to fish through different drawers to put together an outfit.
- Avoid clothing mix-ups between siblings with an idea from one Portola Valley, California, mom: "My three sons all wear oversize clothes, which ended up in each other's drawers. Now I mark the label of my oldest boy's clothes (and his sock toes) with one black dot. The second son gets two dots, the youngest three. When clothes are passed down, we just add a dot."

