DIY Closet Makeover

Build a custom walk-in closet system around two IKEA Tarva dressers, with plywood shelving, cubbies across the top and hanging space on the back wall. You can customize this design to fit any closet.



Before (left) and after (right)

Tools

- [ ] Miter saw or circular saw
- [ ] Table saw (to rip the trim)
- [ ] Brad nailer with brad nails
- [ ] Cordless drill
- [ ] Kreg Jig
- [ ] Tape measure
- [ ] Level
- [ ] Speed square
- [ ] Framing square
- [ ] Stud finder
- [ ] Hammer
- [ ] Utility knife
- [ ] Hand sander
- [ ] Putty knife

- [ ] Scraper (for glue and debris on the concrete)
- [ ] Caulk gun
- [ ] Paint roller with an extension pole
- [ ] Microfiber roller covers
- [ ] Paint trays and a paint brush
- [ ] Dust masks
- [ ] Safety glasses

Supplies

- [ ] IKEA Tarva 5-drawer dressers (2)
- [ ] Liquid Nails
- [ ] Wood screws, including 1 1/4" screws for the plywood base
- [ ] Pocket-hole screws
- [ ] Wood shims
- [ ] Wood filler
- [ ] Sanding discs: 120, 180 and 220 grit
- [ ] Drywall mesh patch and spackling
- [ ] Paintable caulk
- [ ] Painters tape
- [ ] Primer: Extreme Bloc stain blocking primer, Sherwin-Williams
- [ ] Paint: ProClassic interior acrylic latex, Sherwin-Williams, color matched to Creamy White by Benjamin Moore
- [ ] Spray paint for the dresser knobs: Sunlit Brass
- [ ] Concrete and mortar repair
- [ ] Concrete and masonry bonding primer (clear), Behr
- [ ] Porch and patio floor paint in Park Avenue, Behr

Lumber list

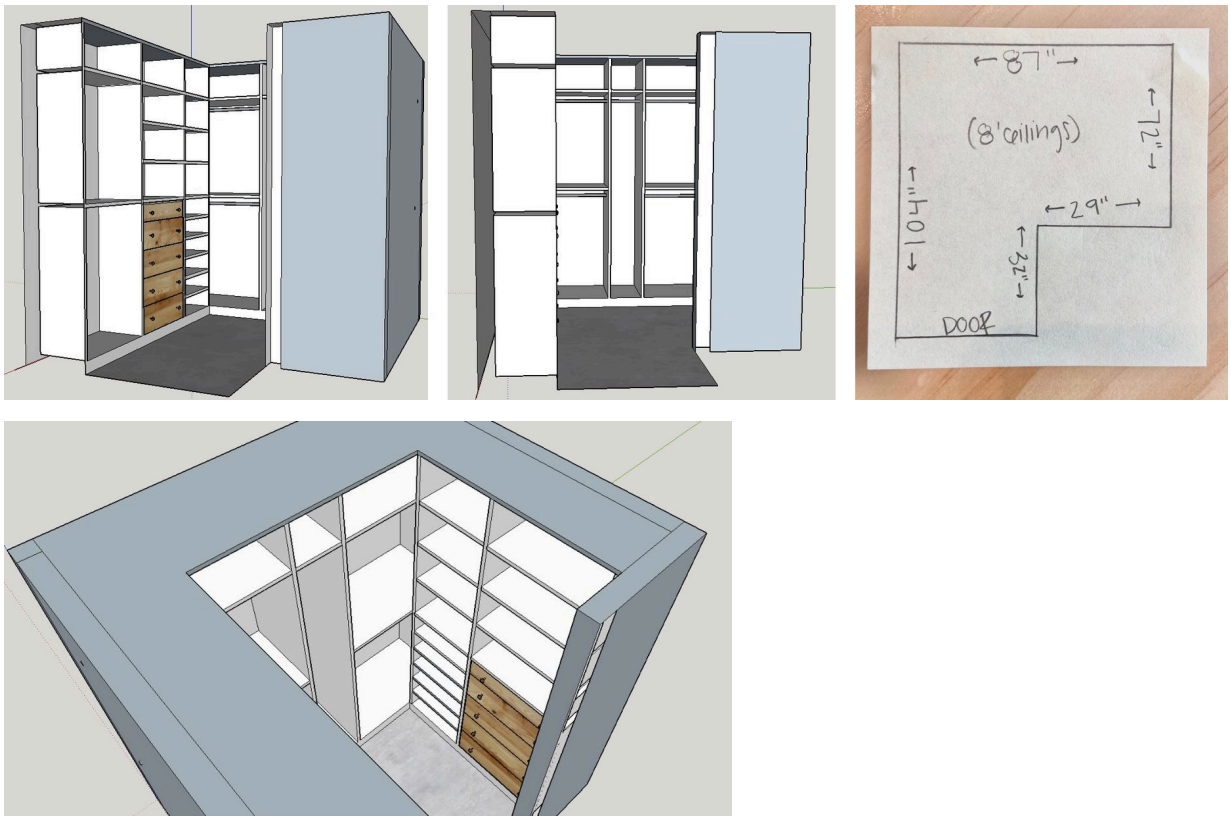
Material	Used for
3/4" Sande plywood	Platform top, vertical supports and shelves
2" x 4" boards	Platform base
1" x 6" boards	Face trim, ripped to 3/4" x 1"
4 1/4" baseboard trim	Base trim

Cut everything to fit your closet. Home Depot can make the long cuts for you so the lumber fits in your car.

This plan contains affiliate links. If you buy through one, I earn a small commission at no extra cost to you.

Closet plan

I designed the closet in SketchUp using our exact closet dimensions. Each side has a Tarva dresser, a cubby for a clothes hamper, shoe shelves and upper shelves for folded clothes. The back wall is all hanging space, with a shared middle section for long items.



Our closet dimensions, with 8' ceilings.

Step 1: Plan your design

Have your design finished before you start building. Use SketchUp if you know it, or a pencil and paper. Plan where each dresser, shelf and hanging section goes so everything fits the way you use it.

Step 2: Take everything out

Move your clothes, shoes and everything else out of the closet to a temporary spot.



Step 3: Remove the wire racks

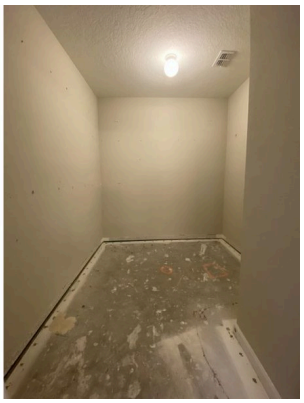
Remove the existing closet racks. Mine were held up with nails and screws, so I used a hammer and drill. They leave holes in the drywall that you'll patch in Step 13.



Step 4: Remove the carpet, padding and tack strips

I didn't want to build the closet system on top of carpet, so I took up the carpet, padding and tack strips and painted the concrete floor instead (Step 17). My How to Paint Concrete Floors tutorial shows how to take up the carpet and get rid of the tack strips.





Step 5: Build the platform out of 2x4s

The closet system sits up on a platform. It looks more high end and you don't have to bend all the way to the floor.

I designed the closet around the Tarva dressers. The dressers are 15 3/4" deep, so the platform on the left and right sides is 15 3/4" deep. The platform on the back wall is 22" deep.

Only put hanging space on the deeper back wall. On the 15 3/4" walls, hangers would stick out past the plywood supports.

Nail the 2×4s together, then screw the platform into the studs so it's secure. Make sure the platform is level and shim it where needed. This saves time when you install the plywood supports.



Step 6: Add 3/4" plywood to the platform

Cut 3/4" plywood to match the platform and screw it down with 1 1/4" screws.

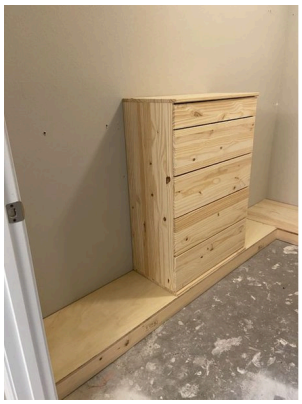
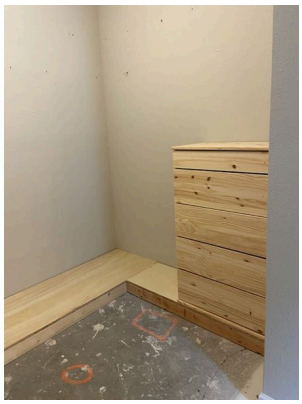




Step 7: Install the IKEA dressers

Set the dressers directly across from each other, flush with the front of the 15 3/4" platform. Skip the legs and base frame that come with the Tarva. Screw the included wall anchors into the dresser and the drywall. Then take out the drawers and screw each dresser down into the platform.



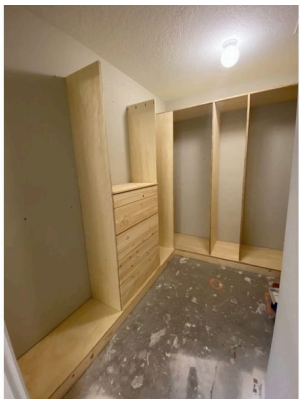
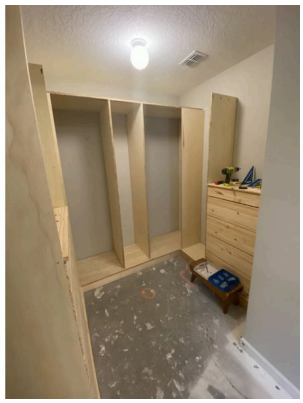



Step 8: Install the vertical supports

Install all the vertical plywood supports first. For supports against the wall, put Liquid Nails on the back and screw them into the studs. Drill pocket holes at the top and bottom of each support so you can screw it down into the platform and up into the top shelf.

For supports against a dresser, use Liquid Nails, screw the support down into the platform with pocket screws and screw it directly into the dresser.

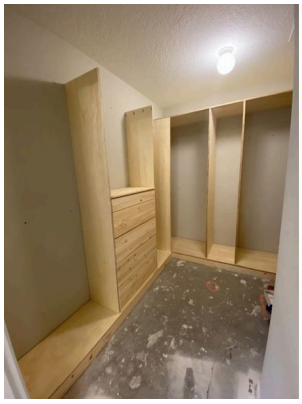


Step 9: Install the horizontal shelves

Install the long top shelves first, then the smaller shelves. Drill pocket holes in each shelf and screw it to the plywood supports with pocket screws.

Holding shelves up while you screw them in is hard to do alone. Cut a few scrap wood supports to hold each shelf exactly where you need it. Make sure every shelf is level and evenly spaced. Shim the top shelves if needed.








Step 10: Build and install the cubbies

Build the cubbies that run along the top of the closet. Start with the back wall, then build the left and right sides. Secure the cubbies to the top plywood shelf with the brad nailer. Once they're in, cut off any shims that stick out.






Step 11: Install the face trim

Rip 1" x 6" boards down to 3/4" x 1" trim. Install trim on every plywood face. Start with the horizontal pieces on top, then the long vertical pieces, and finish with the short shelf pieces.

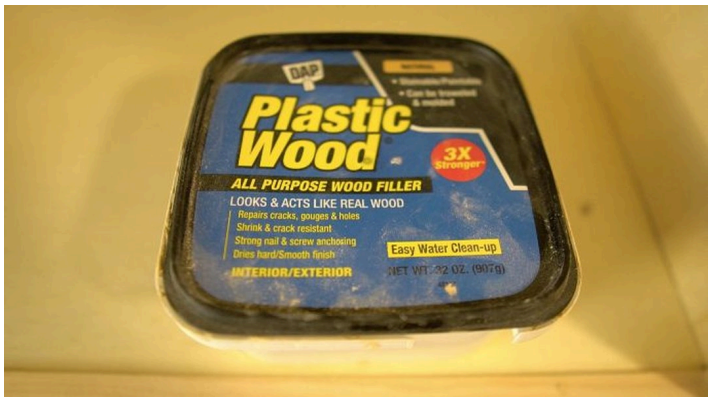






Step 12: Fill nail holes and cracks

Fill all the nail holes and cracks with wood filler. Use your finger for small nail holes and a putty knife for larger cracks.



Step 13: Patch the drywall holes

Patch the holes left by the wire racks with drywall mesh tape and spackling. The spackle goes on pink and dries white. Once it's dry, sand it as smooth as you can without sanding the mesh tape. If your walls are textured, spray texture over the patches.





Step 14: Sand

This step is tedious and messy, but it makes your paint go on smoother. Sand everything with 120 grit, then 180, and finish with 220.



Step 15: Caulk

Vacuum the whole closet and wipe it down with a damp rag first. Run a thin bead of caulk in each seam and smooth it with a wet finger. Keep a wet rag or paper towels handy for extra caulk. Caulk every seam you'll be able to see.





Step 16: Prime and paint

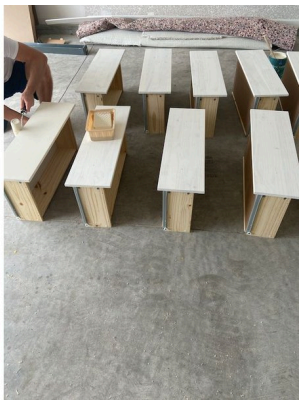
Prime and paint all the built-ins. This closet took a full gallon of primer and a full gallon of paint. Buy an extra gallon of paint for a second coat where it needs it.

Spray paint the wooden dresser knobs that come with the Tarva. I used Sunlit Brass.

















Step 17: Paint the concrete floors

Scrape off any carpet glue and high paint spots. Fill the tack strip holes with concrete filler and a putty knife. Then apply concrete and masonry bonding primer and finish with two coats of porch and patio floor paint. See How to Paint Concrete Floors for the full steps.



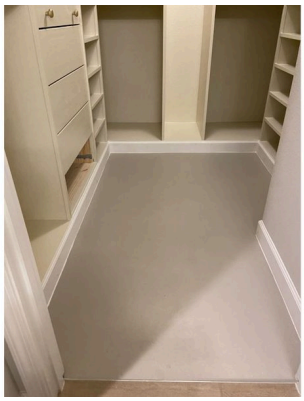




Step 18: Install the base trim

I used 4 1/4" base trim, which fit the platform perfectly. Cut the corners at 45 degrees and nail the trim to the 2×4 platform with a brad nailer. Fill the nail holes with wood filler, caulk the top and bottom seams and paint the trim to match the built-ins.

Let the paint dry for 4 to 5 days before you put anything back in the closet.


More from this project

- Watch Part 1 on YouTube
- Watch Part 2 on YouTube
- How to Paint Concrete Floors
- The final closet reveal