The Pantry
A 5S Transformation

-Stephanie Bouts
The Pantry in its bad normal state

The Situation:
• Two people share this space
• No organized system for storage was ever established
• Food items are not shared between roommates
• Each roommate has a personal shelf for food storage
• This is the only location for dry food storage in the kitchen
• Both of us enjoy cooking and baking – resulting in duplicate ingredients and food items
• Items don’t really have a “home” or a specified storage location

The Problem:
• Over time, the organization of the pantry has disintegrated
• The pantry is no longer a storage location for only food items
• The shelves are over-stocked, causing items to fall to the floor
• There is no ownership over the area since we both use it
Current Organization Status:

**Top Shelf** – Random assortment of items (too high to use to store frequently used items)

**3rd Shelf** – My food shelf

**2nd Shelf** – Baking Shelf

**1st Shelf** – My roommate’s food shelf

**Floor space** – random assortment of non-food items (water bottles, bowls, cooler)
Let’s take a closer look!

This container is blocking the space below the first shelf. I don’t even remember what is behind there.

My roommate actually uses the Cuisinart and the George Foreman on a regular basis…but they look somewhat difficult to access.
Achieve Buy-In From Roommate

The 5S Process That Rescued My Pantry

SORT

SUSTAIN

SET IN ORDER

SHINE

STANDARDIZATION
The **Sorting** Process Begins...

During the sorting process it was easy to identify old or unwanted items. There was also a lot of excess packaging that was taking up space in the pantry. Here is a picture of all of the waste I identified and removed.

I started the sorting process by removing everything from the pantry and spreading it out on the floor. I then grouped items by food category and then by owner.
I labeled every item that was going back into the pantry.

- **Green Stickers** = My Items
- **Blue Stickers** = My Roommate’s Items

*This was an important step in the process because we each had trouble identifying our own food. The color coding helped create ownership over the items in the pantry, and helped each of us identify the food we needed to buy at the grocery store or throw out.*
Sorting Continued...
Determining what does not need to be in the pantry

I found new homes for these items. Some of them still needed to be in close proximity of the kitchen, while others could be located farther away.
The Relocation Effort...

The plastic shelving unit is now located in the water-heater closet. I rarely use the tools in this unit, but it is still easily accessible. I used the tape gun this week and I knew exactly where to find it!

The toolbox (which I rarely use) is now stored on the top shelf in the pantry room. I can easily access the tools, but it is no longer blocking frequently used items in the pantry.
Relocating Several Items to Point Of Use

I moved the plastic bags a cabinet near the stove (where I pack my lunch every morning). Now I can easily access the plastic bags when making my lunch instead of walking back and forth to the pantry. (10 steps) I also took this opportunity to reorganize my spices and create more usable space in this cabinet.

I moved the tea and coffee to the cabinet next to the stove. I can now easily access the tea/coffee, kettle, and mugs while standing at the stove. This has eliminated wasted walking to and from the pantry.
Set In Order: Restocking the Pantry

I consolidated my baking ingredients into labeled containers. This allows for easy identification and visual management. In addition, air tight containers will maintain freshness of the ingredients.

I labeled each shelf by food category (Rice, Breakfast Items, Pasta & Soups, Baking Center).
During the sorting process I identified duplicates (or more) of several items. I stored these items together in “double bin system”. The open item is stored in front of the unopened item. When the open item is finished and thrown away, I will be able to clearly see that there is another box/jar behind it. This will prevent me from buying an item that I already have.
Standardization Continued...

Food Organization Board:
• Hung at the point of use (inside of the pantry door
• Grocery lists are easily accessible. Once you throw an item out you can document it on your grocery list. (reduces the uncertainty while grocery shopping – leading to impulse purchasing.)
• Stickers and Sharpie Markers to help maintain the color-coding system
• Coupons are consolidated in one place on the board. Before grocery shopping I can quickly grab my grocery list and the necessary coupons.
The Good Normal State Achieved!