

MUD ROOMS:

boots and all

MORE THAN JUST A DUMPING GROUND FOR WET WELLIES, A MUD ROOM CAN BE A MAGNIFICENTLY MULTI-FUNCTIONAL WONDER

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WHILE THE FRONT entrance is the public face of your home, ideally kept pristine and stylish, a mud room is the hard-working skivvy behind the scenes. Usually sited at the back or side of the house or off the garage, this repository for daily detritus keeps smelly boots, school bags and wet brollies out from underfoot. If a dedicated room just for coats and shoes seems too great a luxury for the average space-challenged home, read on.

Done right, a mud room can perform multiple functions, and with a lockable door between this versatile zone and the rest of your home, it can add an extra level of security as well as convenience. >



perfect placement

While a mud room's function is to filter the disarray, it needn't be messy. The secret is planning. A separate compartment for each family member is a great way to keep everything tidy and to encourage kids to be responsible for their belongings. Include a bench seat, sturdy coat hooks for each person, and storage for shoes underneath in pigeonholes or drawers. "It's helpful to have a separate boot tray near the doors for muddy and wet boots and shoes to be wiped or hosed," says interior designer Melinda Hartwright.

Drawers will keep the space looking tidy, which might be important if it's an area visible from the living spaces. "If you choose to hide away bags, use a mesh as a face material or incorporate air vents to allow them to breathe – especially if they are sports or school bags!" suggests Michael Allsopp of Spaceworks.

"Include a shelf with power points, so mobile phones and laptops can be charged ready to be put in school bags or handbags in the morning" ~ Jo McIntyre, building designer, Beautiful Home



a dog's life

The mud room is the perfect place for man's best friend, giving your dog a warm indoor space to hang while the family's out, without allowing him the run of the whole house. A dog door to a secure backyard is a first step, along with a cosy corner for the dog bed and feeding station. Drawers are handy for storing collars, leads and toys, and you might want to include a secure drawer or cupboard for food – one that cannot be accessed by a wily pooch.

Turning your mud room into a dog-grooming parlour is a fantastic use of space. "Include a designated tiled wet area for showering dogs with a spray hose, and add a power point for plugging in clippers and hair dryers," suggests Melinda. Keep the grooming station at hip height to save your back, and invest in the same sort of hard-wearing surfaces you'd use in a laundry: tiles, laminates or stone composites.



swimming idea

If pool users are regularly trekking through the back door after a swim, only to drip chlorinated water over the hallway carpet, it's worth killing two birds with one stone and installing a shower. To make this work, you'll need a tiled wet area divided by a shower screen to avoid splashes. Including a linen cupboard will give ready access to clean towels, and a toilet and basin let the space serve the double purpose of allowing playing kids and green thumbs to use the facilities without tracking in mess. >



in the wash

A combined mud room and laundry, such as this Porter Davis-designed room (left), is a logical pairing, allowing grubby sports kit to be flung directly in the washing machine or sink. Practical material choices are important, but needn't be super-expensive. "There are many high-quality laminates which are great for laundries because they wear well, are moisture resistant and come in a range of colours," says Michael. Make use of organisational gadgets like pull-out laundry baskets, broom and mop rails and wall-mounted ironing boards. "A large sink with a retractable spray tap is a super-useful feature, so muddy boots and shoes can be hosed off, dog bowls can be rinsed and refilled, and house plants can be soaked without cluttering up the kitchen," adds Melinda.

PHOTOGRAPHY (THIS PAGE, FROM TOP) ARNELLE HABIB, PORTER DAVIS (OPPOSITE, FROM TOP) GAP PHOTOS/DOUGLAS GIBB, AUBRIE PICK, SIMON WHITBREAD

special delivery

If you run a business from home or shop online regularly, planning safe delivery is a must. This is where new smart home technology comes in, allowing you to create a parcel delivery point with a secure door from the mud room into the rest of the house, and remote access locks fitted to the outer door. Lockwood's smart door locks can be operated remotely via your smartphone or

tablet, so when your courier arrives, you can let them in, wherever you are. Fitting a remote-operation wi-fi HD camera allows you to check who's visiting your home while you're out, as well as letting you keep an eye on what your furry friend is up to. Both devices – as well as a host of others such as motion sensors, smart lights and thermostats – can all be operated by the new Telstra Smart Home platform.



STYLE & SUBSTANCE

A mud room might be a practical zone, but there's no reason why it can't be pretty, too. In fact, as the last space you walk through when leaving the house and the first one that greets you on your return, it deserves some extra love. Opt for durable flooring – interior designer Melinda Hartwright suggests darker hues to disguise dirt, in tough materials such as vinyl, stone or tiles. “Lay them in patterns, such as herringbone, French or brick patterns, for an interesting decorative effect,” she says. Choose a colour palette to complement the rest of the house for a seamless effect, but don't be afraid to splash out on bold wallpaper or a striking colour. Opt for vinyl wallpaper, which will withstand moisture and can be wiped clean. 