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Robin Nadel of Wayne Swadron Architect designed locker-style cubbies with space underneath for ski boots; the bench has drawers for extra storage. The stone floor's rough texture hides dirt. Floor tiles, Allstone Quarry Products; millwork, Bernard Rioux Cabinetmaker; hat, jacket, The Sign of the Skier; wall colour, Old White (4), Farrow & Ball.

DESIGN *the* ULTIMATE MUDROOM

HOW TO PLAN AN ENTRANCE THAT LOOKS GRAND — EVEN WHEN IT'S FILLED WITH GEAR. TEXT BY MEREDITH BIRCHALL-SPENCER

If the most appealing mudrooms are equal parts brain and brawn, then this one's a catch: tall, dark, handsome *and* smart. Located in a five-bedroom ski chalet in Collingwood, Ont., it's the take-off and landing hub for a family of four and their weekend guests returning from a day on the slopes. Wayne Swadron of Wayne Swadron Architect and interior designer Jay Hodgins of Gluckstein Design Planning, who collaborated on the 10-by-16-foot space, offer these tips for maximizing efficiency in your own mudroom.

RIGHT: This ski and snowboard storage rack features a grate where melting snow can drain, eliminating water pooling on the floor. Distressed beadboard can take a beating and still look attractive. Skis, poles, The Sign of the Skier.

1. Define the purpose. A mudroom that doubles as your primary entrance calls for a handsome look. Keep it neat with closed cabinets or armoires for out-of-season or unsightly items.

2. Evaluate your lifestyle. What activities will you be doing that require gear to be stowed? Dog owners, for example, might install hooks for a leash and stoop-and-scoop bags.

3. Take inventory. Count and measure all equipment; plan to accommodate the largest of each kind. Know the number of shoes and coats each family member has and allocate adequate storage.

4. Consider climate. When will the mudroom be used? A winter cabin benefits from a heated floor, a beach house from a place to wash sandy feet.

5. Accommodate all occupants. For small children, design a cubby with both low hooks and a higher rod. Incorporate extra storage for guests, aging parents or more children.

6. Choose durable finishes. Select materials for floors and walls that don't show dirt or scuffs. Here, Swadron chose flagstone because it's non-slip and resistant to water and salt stains. On the cabinetry, Hodgins used distressed finishes that will be enhanced by wear and tear.

7. Consider the door. A larger door accommodates bulky equipment like hockey bags. Allow for open floor space inside the door for setting groceries down.

