



**DECLUTTER YOUR HOME AND
ORGANIZE
YOUR LIFE**

Table of Contents

How to Declutter Your Home - Introduction	2
Why Decluttering is Good for Your Health and Wellbeing	3
When Does Clutter Become a Problem?.....	5
Preparing to Declutter	7
Developing a System.....	8
How to Decide Whether to Keep an Item.....	8
Common Excuses for Holding onto Things	9
Room by Room Decluttering Tips	10
Kitchen	10
Family Room/Living Room.....	10
Office	11
Garage.....	11
Bedroom	12
Laundry Room.....	12
Bathroom.....	13
Tips for Keeping Clutter at Bay Long Term	14

How to Declutter Your Home - Introduction

It's easy to understand how clutter can affect your life. When you have trouble finding things because there is so much "stuff" everywhere, this can make you less productive. They can even cause you to be late attending events, getting the kids off to school, and handling any other obligation.

Physical clutter can also be unsafe.

If your floor is covered with objects that don't need to be there, and you have to cut a trail through them just to get through your room, you are causing trip and fall hazards. This is especially the case if you have to get up in the middle of the night.



Why Decluttering is Good for Your Health and Wellbeing

Clutter can also lead to mental issues.

Scientists at the Princeton University Neuroscience Institute in New Jersey uncovered some startling data regarding how a disorganized, clutter-filled environment can affect you mentally. They published their findings in the January, 2011 issue of The Journal of Neuroscience. Here is the science-talk takeaway:

"Multiple stimuli present in the visual field at the same time compete for neural representation by mutually suppressing their evoked activity throughout visual cortex, providing a neural correlate for the limited processing capacity of the visual system."

Say what? In layman's terms, clutter shuts down the ability of your brain to process even simple information. Your ability to focus is severely restricted. Subconsciously, even though you may be trying to focus on one task or stream of input, your mind is busy trying to process everything that your eyes see on the periphery of your vision.

This can make you feel frustrated and angry at the end of your day. You were working hard all day long, really trying to get a lot accomplished, but your clutter was guaranteeing that you were less productive than you could have been.

If you lack organization and order at home, your work space will be clutter-filled as well. If you have a cluttered living area, your computer, phone, personal and business relationships, finances and all other areas of your life are probably cluttered and disorganized too. So when you learn to control clutter, you create a more productive environment everywhere you go.

WebMD reports that clutter, if left alone, can negatively impact your health.

It creates a lot of stress. Why is that a problem? Stress elevates your heart rate, and if untreated, can lead to high blood pressure and even an irregular heartbeat called arrhythmia. Stress affects your respiratory system as well. In some people, this incredible strain on your lungs when you are anxious and stressed out can lead to a panic attack.

Stress keeps your digestive system in a constant state of agitation. This skyrockets the possibility that you will develop ulcers, nausea, acid reflux, irritable bowel syndrome and a number of digestion related issues. Your skin, your immune system, your muscles, your body weight and even your reproductive system are affected negatively by stress.

As you can see, even if you believe a cluttered, disorganized, messy environment has no effect on you, it is causing physical and mental damage in a number of ways. Have you struggled with your weight, chronic anxiety and stress, or other physical and mental problems your entire life? Have you tried in vain to alleviate those issues?

It could be that simply decluttering your home is the secret weapon that has been missing from your approach to health and wellness. Clean up your clutter, and you may just find yourself slimmer and trimmer, calm and focused, happier and healthier.

In this e-book you will discover what clutter is, and what it isn't. This allows you to quickly tell when clutter is actually clutter, and when your disorganized desk might not be a problem. You will learn a simple system that sets you up for decluttering success. This includes learning how to choose whether you should keep or throw out a particular item.

You will learn specific organizational tips for each room of your home, as well as how to keep your environment clutter-free for the long-term. Remember, clutter can negatively affect so many areas of your life, and you may not even be aware that it is doing so. So let's get started figuring out if you have a clutter problem in the first place, what to do about it, and how to maintain a clutter-free home so you are healthier mentally and physically.



When Does Clutter Become a Problem?

Have you ever heard of clutter creep? This is when things, disorganization and stuff seemingly appear out of nowhere. In actuality, your clean, pristine work space did not become cluttered and disorganized overnight. The clutter slowly crept into your life, one mishandled object at a time.

This is not always a big deal.

If your wallet or purse, keychain, loose change and beverage from your drive-through window lunch break are fouling up your work area, that may not be too big of a problem. But there is a point when clutter becomes a serious problem, creating stress, wrecking your productivity and negatively affecting other areas of your life.

When clutter becomes a real issue is based on the individual. Some require an immaculate living and work area to function properly. Others are at their best when they can see a few possessions that lend them a sense of comfort in their immediate area. Most of the time however, clutter becomes a problem you have to take seriously if you notice 3 or more the following symptoms:

- You feel like you are always cleaning and organizing.
- You feel frazzled, frustrated and mentally sapped at the end of the day.
- You have to carve out a path through the rooms in your house because of all of your clutter.
- You are embarrassed to invite anyone over to your home.
- You have so much clutter, you don't know where to begin decluttering.
- You are late paying bills and meeting other financial obligations because you have a problem organizing your paperwork.



- You spend more time on a daily basis looking for things than it takes to actually organize or declutter your environment.
- You are always looking for more time in your day.
- You consistently say "I'll do it tomorrow" regarding decluttering your life.
- You feel like every aspect of your life is disorganized, and you feel powerless to do anything about it.

Clutter can be crippling, both physically and mentally. Unfortunately, studies show that somewhere **between 25% and 35% of American households admit to having a clutter problem.** This means that number is probably a lot higher, since no one likes to admit to being disorganized and messy. In Canada and the United Kingdom, 20% to 30% of polled homeowners report having a problem with clutter, so this is a serious problem found across the globe.

Now you know how much of a health risk clutter is. You also understand that you may have a problem with extra "stuff" that is cluttering up your life. The next step? You need to put a decluttering system into place.

Preparing to Declutter

Right now you should be really excited. You are preparing to experience more productivity, better mental and physical health and less stress and anxiety in your life. All of these wonderful benefits can be achieved simply by cleaning up and organizing your life. One of the first things you need to do to de-clutter your existence is to head to the store.

Yes, you may need to buy a few things to help you clobber clutter. Consider purchasing the following items to help you prepare to de-clutter. (You may not need any of the following items. However, they could help you declutter quickly and effectively.)

- An egg timer or digital timer (with alarm)
- Boxes, boxes, boxes
- Magic markers, sharpies
- Adhesive backed labels, post-it notes
- Moving labels
- Cleaning supplies
- Stepping stool, 3 step ladder
- Food storage containers
- Plastic bins with lids
- Clear glass jars
- File sorter
- Closet and drawer organizers
- Bulletin board
- Stackable shoe boxes
- Hangers
- File, partition boxes
- Zip ties
- Shelf units
- Pegboard (pegboard kit)

As you can see, there are quite a few items which will help you in your decluttering efforts. Again, you may not need all of these organizational helpers, but they can go a long way in helping you live a clutter free life.

Developing a System

You may be so inundated with clutter that you don't know where to begin. Don't feel overwhelmed. Start in 10 or 20 minute chunks, tackling small areas. Don't bounce around from one project to another. Stay on one decluttering mission until it is finished, or until you have reached your time limit.

Begin on the room where you spend the most time. If the majority of your time at home is spent in the living room, decluttering this area first will provide the most benefits. When that room is finished, continue to focus your efforts on those rooms where you spend most of your time.

Establish some sensible expectations. If you have lived in a clutter-filled environment your whole life, you will probably not be able to declutter over a weekend. Write down a plan for daily clutter cleaning, and stick to it. Over time, consistent, daily efforts will pay off in a big way.

Probably the number one issue most people have when organizing and decluttering is knowing what to keep, and what to throw away or donate. Let's take a look at some simple tips that will help you how to decide whether or not you should hang onto or discard something.

How to Decide Whether to Keep an Item

Decluttering is all about making hard decisions. Ask yourself the following 9 questions when deciding what to purge and what to keep.

- Is it broken? If so, is it worth fixing?
- Has this item been used in the last year? If not, will it be used in the near future?
- Would it be expensive or difficult to replace?
- Am I keeping it simply because it would be harder to get rid of it?
- Would I prefer this item, or the space it is taking up?
- If I were moving to another city today, would I keep it?
- Is there someone who can enjoy this item or benefit from it more than I am?
- Do I have other things that serve the same purpose?
- Does it fit your style, your space, your needs, your body, etc.?

As you were going through the questions we just listed, you may have run into some issues. This is because some possessions cause sentimental and emotional reactions. Sometimes, your emotional response is justified. Other times though, you are simply making excuses for holding onto things because of unfounded

sentimental, financial or other reasons. You need to understand when you are just making an excuse to justify keeping something, or when you should actually hang onto it.

Common Excuses for Holding onto Things

There are only a few root causes for holding onto possessions. You may have an emotional tie to something that is simply too strong to consider getting rid of it. There could also be a legitimate and sensible reason for keeping an item rather than throwing it out when you are decluttering your environment. Perhaps you spent a lot of money on an object, and that is keeping you from purging it.

The qualification questions mentioned in the last section can help you get past your emotions and discover what really needs to be kept, and what you need to get rid of. You should also bear in mind some of the following common excuses for holding onto clutter that you may be making.

- I paid a lot of money for this!
- I have plenty of room, so why can't I keep it?
- I might need it someday.
- It's in perfect condition.
- It is going to come back into style.
- It's old, it might be valuable.
- It was a gift from ____.
- I am holding it until I can give it to ____.
- I want to save it for my kids.

Take photographs of sentimental objects that you have been hanging onto forever. The photographs can easily be organized in a photo album to keep your memories alive, and then you can either donate or throw out the physical object.

Things that you paid a lot of money for can be sold. You may not recover anywhere near what you paid for them, but they are not making you any money sitting in your garage or attic. Don't just keep hoping something will be used one day, or that you may have a valuable antique on your hands.

Have a professional appraiser check out anything you think may be valuable. Sell it or trash it based on that advice. If you are holding onto a family heirloom to give to your children, that is admirable. Just realize that you are going to have to purge something else if you decide to keep that particular item. Decluttering is all about making hard decisions, but the productivity and health rewards are worth this daunting task.

Room by Room Decluttering Tips

Different types of rooms require different decluttering approaches. You can refer to the "Preparing to Declutter" section above for room-specific items you can buy that help make your job easier. Consider the following tips when you are trying to declutter your ...

Kitchen

- Begin with your lower cabinets. This can free up a lot of space for countertop appliances and other items.
- Use a left to right pattern. This keeps you from jumping around, and makes you more efficient.
- When you are finished with your lower cabinets, declutter your upper cabinets.
- Work on your kitchen drawers next, starting with those that you use the most.
- Now you can clear your countertops, using the space you created when you decluttered your cabinets.
- Finally, work on your pantry from the top down.

Family Room/Living Room

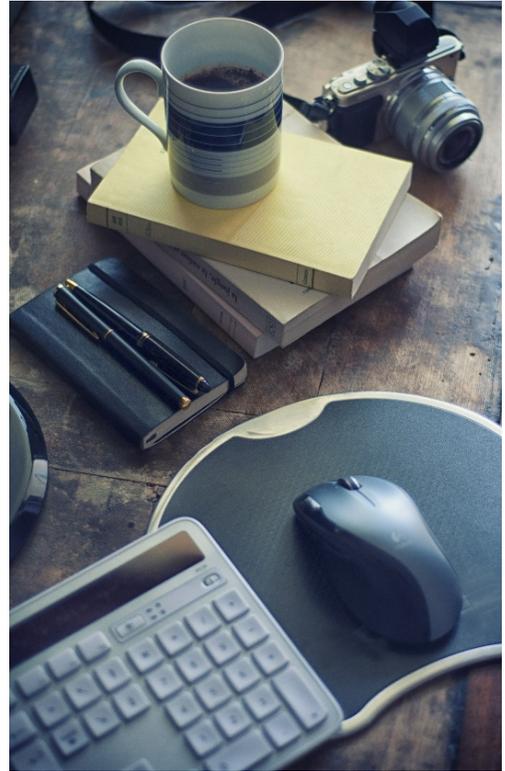
- Consider buying furniture that has built-in storage space.
- Choose digital movie memberships over physical DVDs.
- Buy a small wicker basket to hold all of your remote controls.
- Use zip ties to de-clutter cables and cords on your entertainment system.
- Go through the toys, DVDs, video games, books, magazines and knickknacks in your living room. Do you really need them? Can someone else use them? Purge as many as possible.



- Perform an honest furniture appraisal. Is there any furniture you can get rid of without limiting the functionality of your family room?

Office

- Create zones – one for storage, one for paperwork, one for research and one for computer work.
- Limit your desk to what you need on a daily basis. If you don't use something every day (or at least once a week) relegate it to a drawer or storage area, instead of your desktop.
- Limit the number of personal items on your desk.
- Post-it notes can be distracting. Every day, transfer all notes and messages you have jotted down to your digital calendar or day planner.
- Get your printer off of your desk.
- Sit in your office chair and extend your arms. Within arm's reach should only be those things you use on a daily basis.
- Purchase drawer organizers.
- Use zip ties to de-clutter cables and cords.



Garage

- Purchase pegboard and shelving.
- Pull everything out of your garage, and this means everything. Go through these items, forming groups that you will donate, trash and keep.
- Now that your garage is empty, clean it top to bottom. Install pegboard and shelving, nails and hooks, getting your possessions, tools, sporting equipment and everything else up off of the floor.

- Consider a fold-down table which attaches to your wall instead of a temporary table.

Bedroom

- Make your bed every morning. This is what psychologists call a keystone habit – one that triggers you to perform other positive habits every day.
- Walk through your room, clearing basic clutter first.
- Dust and clean your bedroom thoroughly.
- Use plastic bins with lids for under the bed storage.
- Add a clothes hamper, and take your clothes to your laundry room daily.
- Throw out old magazines. Hardback books you want to keep should be removed to your living room or library.
- A bedside table with drawers will keep your nightstands clean and clutter-free.
- Remember, less is more. The National Sleep Foundation has found that your sleep, sex life and overall mental health improve the more things you take out of your bedroom.



Laundry Room

- First things first, wash, dry and hang up all of the laundry in your home. This may be a big task, but it needs to be done first.
- Next, remove anything sitting on top of your washer or dryer.



- Start at the top of any shelving units in your laundry room and work down. De-clutter and organize.
- Take out anything that doesn't make sense. If you are storing your bicycle in your laundry room, take it to the garage and hang it from ceiling hooks.
- Plastic bins or baskets should be used to store similar items. For example, bleach, fabric softer and laundry detergent should all be stored in the same bin.
- Do you keep your cat's litter box in your laundry room? If so, purchase a litter box system with a shield or cover. This reduces spillage onto your floor.

Bathroom

- Remove dirty clothes and towels.
- Perform a quick and basic decluttering of countertops, shelves and furniture.
- Purchase hanging racks for your shower and use them to organize your shampoos, conditioners, soaps, etc.
- Organize your linen closet, and the cabinets below your sink.
- Attack your medicine cabinet next, throwing out everything that is expired.
- Remember these tips – powder-based beauty products are good for 18 to 24 months. Lipstick and lip gloss should not be kept more than a year. Mascara and liquid eyeliner should be replaced every 3 to 6 months. Liquid foundation can last for up to a year.



Tips for Keeping Clutter at Bay Long Term

Congratulations, you have cleaned up the clutter! Now let's keep that organization and order in place, with the following clutter free maintenance tips.

- Only purchase what you need. This means cutting back on recreational shopping. When you buy things needlessly, those items and possessions have to go somewhere. This leads to clutter creeping back into your life. When you only buy what you need, your finances are affected positively as well.
- Give away, donate, throw out toys for upcoming holidays and birthdays.
- Handle all of your physical and virtual mail one time. Sort your snail mail of your trashcan, instead of just plopping it down on your desk to deal with later.
- Create a place for everything important.
- Simplify. Do you really need 40 pairs of shoes or 25 baseball caps? Probably not.
- Stop buying on impulse. When waiting in the checkout line, ignore all of the inexpensive, high impulse items placed there to get your attention.
- Scan receipts, warranties, letters and other documents and throw out all those piles of paper. Save the scanned data on a folder in your computer.
- Put things away immediately.
- Keep a donation box, add to it regularly, and drop it off once a week.
- Download a decluttering application. There are some excellent organization and decluttering apps available for free for your smart phone.
- If something comes in, something has to go out. This single tip can work wonders and in keeping your home clutter free once you get it there.
- Perform once a month clutter busting sessions.
- Make everyone in your family responsible for his or her personal space. You simply don't have enough time or energy to run around behind your family cleaning up the clutter they are causing.