

DECLUTTERING AND ORGANISING YOUR HOME

In an ideal world, your home is the place where you feel the most comfortable. Making sure it is beautiful, organised and clutter free is essential. Sometimes, however, this can be a real challenge. The following points and checklists will help to make it that bit easier to keep your home clutter-free.

GETTING STARTED WITH DECLUTTERING

When you decide to start decluttering your home, it is tempting to try and do the entire house in one go. But this is likely to cause you to become overwhelmed. The key is to take decluttering and organising one step at a time.

Start small when you begin decluttering. If your home is cluttered, getting rid of things may well seem intimidating. By starting small, even it is just one single kitchen drawer, you will soon see how much you can get done in even just 15 minutes. But before you get started, it is always useful to have a plan.

MAKE A PLAN

- Walk through your home with fresh eyes and make a list of absolutely everything you think you want to change. This list may be long but that's okay, it won't stay that way forever.
- Looking at your list, make a note of which room or space irritates you the most.
- Try and decide what you feel needs to be tackled right away and what can wait a while.
 - Perhaps coming up with a letter or number system might help. For example, all the things you want to be done right away, mark with an "A" or a "1". If the job is important to you but not urgent, mark with a "B" or a "2" by it. If it is not a priority at all, mark it with a "C" or a "3" by it.
 - Feel free to use any system that works for you.
- Use a calendar, planner diary to plan out your decluttering projects.

- Look at your already prioritised to-do list and start writing all of the critical/number one projects in for the week or two ahead.
- Do not put more than two or three projects on one day; otherwise, you may get overwhelmed.
- Keep doing this daily and/or weekly, until you get all of your decluttering and organising projects done.

THINGS TO INCLUDE ON YOUR TO-DO LIST BY AREA

When you start your decluttering projects, it's important to only focus on what's on your list. It is very likely that as you start doing one project, you'll see tons of other projects that need doing. Try not to be tempted to do them all immediately. You'll wind up getting overwhelmed. If you notice something else you need to do along the way, note it down on your prioritised to-do list and carry on with your current project.

BATHROOMS

Before organising your bathroom, go through everything thoroughly and throw out (or donate) anything that's outdated or no longer needed, including:

- Old scissors or razors
- Expired prescriptions
- Any makeup over a year old
- Out of date products
- Things you don't like or use
- Throw out all empty and almost empty bottles

It's easier than you might think about creating more storage in a small bathroom. Doing these kinds of things will maximise the space you do have:

- Place a magnet strip inside your medicine cabinet to hang things like scissors and tweezers.
- Make a simple skirt to put around free-standing sinks to hide cleaning products underneath.
- Allocate a square, see-through container for the personal items of each family member.

- Keep cleaners in their own container under the sink, so they're accessible when you need them. It's also handy to label your cleaners by room. This will stop you from taking bathroom cleaners out of the bathroom and having to look for them later.
- Make sure you have lots of extra things your guests might need, if you have a guest bathroom, such as:
 - Soaps
 - Toothbrushes
 - Shampoo
 - Other hair products
- Small containers or baskets can help to organise otherwise cluttered bathroom drawers and cupboards properly. Small containers could be used for:
 - Jewellery
 - Make-up
 - Floss
 - Soaps

It's easy for a lot of clutter to build up in bathrooms. Try these quick ideas, so this doesn't happen:

- Only the items that you use regularly should be kept on your counters.
- Empty the trash every day.
- Have clothes hampers for dirty clothes.
- If you have children, keep a bag in the tub for bath toys.

KITCHEN

Before you start to declutter and organise your kitchen, you need to be aware of everything that happens in there. There are five primary activities that you do in the kitchen. They are:

- Food preparation
- Food storage
- Cleaning
- Cooking
- Serving

With this in mind, did you know your kitchen is more effective if you set it up like a triangle? More often than not, you'll move from the sink to the stove to the fridge. So, you'd make the stove, sink and fridge the "points"

of your triangle, meaning the time spent in the kitchen will be more productive.

- Try keeping your fridge organised by doing the following to keep it clutter free:
 - Go through and throw out rotten food at least once a week.
 - Store leftovers in clear, labelled, containers.
 - Have a look through your condiments, and check expiration dates.
 - Have a different shelf for different kinds of food and drinks.
- It's essential to organise your food cupboards so that you always know what you have in stock, like so:
 - Group similar foods together, i.e. fruits, vegetables, cooking sauces, soups.
 - Use boxes and/or baskets for smaller items, such as gravy and stock cubes.
 - Alphabetise your spices.

Organising other cupboards and cabinets is also essential because we open them several times a day.

- Put all mugs, glasses and cups in a cupboard near the sink if you can.
- Try to give all similar items their own shelf, i.e. plates, bowls, containers, etc.
- If you don't have a lot of cupboard space, sort through all your kitchenware and put what you can live without in storage or donate it.

If you have a tiny kitchen, however, it may be hard to organise it in precisely the way you want. Here are some tips for making a little more space:

- Install mug hooks underneath your cupboards.
- Use square containers instead of round ones.
- Line up pat and pan lids vertically.
- Get rolling drawer units that you can just pull out when you need them.

- Keep a magnetic notepad on the fridge to write down things you need to buy on your next shopping trip. Then, before you go shopping, check your list against your fridge, freezer and cupboards to avoid buying items you already have.

WARDROBES

Start organising your cluttered closets by clearing out everything you don't need, such as:

- Throwing away, selling or donate any clothes that don't fit anymore or are out of fashion.
- If you haven't worn it in 6 months to a year, get rid of it.
- Go through shoes and throw out any that are damaged or are too old to wear.
- If you have a very full wardrobe, it can help to try and categorise them. For example:
 - Hang complete outfits together. i.e. suits
 - Categorise by season. e.g. winter and summer.
 - Categorise by style.

To have a genuinely uncluttered closet, you need to be able to store things well.

- Store things in plastic, see-through, containers so that it's easy to see what's in them.
- Use shelving for storing shoes and extra folded clothes.
- Keep a few baskets in your wardrobes to store clothes that need mending, or clothes that you're planning to sell or donate to charity.
- Hang hooks in your wardrobe to eliminate a lot of smaller items cluttering things up, such as:
 - Belts and ties
 - Coats and jackets
 - Umbrellas and bags
- Hang a bag specifically for shoes on the back of your wardrobe door to maximise space.

BOOKS, MAGAZINES, MOVIES AND CDS (MEDIA)

- Go through all of the magazines you have around the home and throw out everything that you've already read.
- If you have saved a magazine or newspaper just for one or two articles, tear out the pieces and throw the rest away.
- If you're going to keep books and magazines, try to categorise them by subject, or in the best way that works for you.

- For example, group cookbooks together and gardening books together.
- Categorise your music and movies, too.
- Use a labelling system to keep all of your media where it needs to be.
- You could go one step further by colour coding your media items, which will make finding what you need quicker.
- Store magazines in plastic, vertical magazine holders to save space.

KID'S ROOMS

When decluttering and organising kids bedrooms, it is a great idea to divide up the room according to what your child needs. For example:

- Sleeping area
 - Reading area
 - Homework area
 - Play area
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- Use stackable baskets in the wardrobe for shoes, scarves, gloves, etc.
 - Use higher shelves in the wardrobes for seasonal clothes that are not currently in use.
 - Use bigger buckets for larger toys and decorated ice cream tubs for smaller toys.
 - Store books, stuffed animals and craft items on shelving units. Making sure they are screwed to the wall for safety reasons.

THE OFFICE (HOME)

These days, many homes have a home office. But these spaces have the potential to be the most cluttered and disorganised areas of a house.

- Try arranging your desks or tables in an "L" shape or a "U" shape, giving you two or three substantial work areas.
- Only keep what you need and use in desk drawers. If not, clutter will start to build up very quickly. Just because you can't see it, doesn't mean it isn't there.
- Build yourself time into every day to sort through and clear off the papers on your desk and put things where they belong.
- Try using folders for everything to really help you keep organised. For example, you can have separate folders for each of these things:
 - Bills
 - Budget

- Research
 - Records
- Even better, if you have a computer, scan all your papers and use an electronic note/filing system like Evernote or OneNote.
- Have a large master calendar on the wall of your office at all times. This will organise not only your office but your life as well.
- Make sure your calendar is large enough for you to log down all of your essential activities, and that it is in a place where it is always visible to you.

GARAGE AND SHED

Garages and sheds can be incredibly overwhelming because, often, everything that we don't want in the house ends up in these two places.

- Always use lots of shelving in your shed and garage because they keep things off the floor and give you more room for more significant items.
- Use pegboards to hang up a wide variety of items, such as:
 - Tools
 - Ladders
 - Garden Hoses
 - Wood
- Store gardening tools in a portable basket or bucket so that they're easy to transport.
- Make sure all similar tools and supplies (i.e. car tools and supplies) are stored together to make it easier to find them when you need them.
- Dedicate a portion of your shed and/or garage to outdoor toys and recreational activities. Large buckets can be great for this kind of thing.