

Ten Ways to De-Clutter Your Home

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One source of stress for many people is disorganization and not being able to find things when they need to use them. The most common clutter hot spots are usually kid's bedrooms, home offices, kitchen counters, basements and garages. Here are some key home organization strategies.



- Find a place for every item. One reason things pile up on counters, tables and floors is that they have no specific "home." According to Sharon Lowenheim, a professional organizer in New York City, "Make sure everything lives somewhere." Try to store items in the same room where they'll be used to help ensure they get put away when you're done using them.
- Scan your home for clutter hot spots. Try to figure out why stuff accumulates in certain areas. If family members leave dirty dishes in the sink, find out why they don't load them into the dishwasher. Maybe it's because they have to unload the clean dishes and all the plastic containers fall on their heads when they open a cabinet to put the clean ones away.
- Play clutter cop. Try to keep things out of your house if you don't really need them. Do you really need another t-shirt, water bottle or coffee mug just because it's free? Consider getting books to read from the library so you can return them rather than buying new ones. If you do buy new books, take them to a book resale shop or donate them to a local shelter. Call or write to credit card companies or other direct marketers to decrease your volume of junk mail. Look for opportunities to block unneeded items before they cross your doorstep.
- Eliminate duplicates. Do you need 20 coffee mugs and 6 hairbrushes? Anytime you buy something new, try to get rid of something old. Before you buy a new computer or appliance, figure out what you're going to do with the one you already have.
- Limit nostalgia. Get a plastic box for each child and save only a few of their art creations each year. Consider taking a picture of your child holding their creation to remember the artwork. If your child creates something really special, find a way to display it in your home.
- Thin out your wardrobe. Most people wear 20% of their clothes, 80% of the time. Have each family member sort through their clothes at the end of each season to determine if anything doesn't fit or is no longer in style. Toss unwanted clothes into a box and donate them to your favorite charity.
- Find simple clutter control solutions. If keys are frequently misplaced, hang a couple of hooks by the front door or in the kitchen so keys can easily be accessed. Have hooks in the garage to hang up shovels and rakes; put shoes in shoe holders; use drawer dividers for sorting kitchen utensils. You will save time and frustration if household items are easy to find when you need to use them.
- Create your own organization "kits." Buy some clear plastic shoebox-sized containers and put together kits with items needed for a particular task like a sewing kit, a tool kit, a shoeshine kit, or a gift wrapping kit.
- Set up a filing system for bill paying. File charge card and bank account balance statements and paycheck stubs or consider paying bills on-line to eliminate paper trails.
- Be patient and persistent. Effective de-cluttering takes time. Budget some time each day for some spaces, like kitchen counters, which may need daily de-cluttering. Try to involve all family members in taking responsibility for putting away items after they use them so one person in the family does not get all the work of putting things away.
- Even if you aren't always able to keep up with clutter, don't get upset about it. Using even a few of the organizational tips above will help you to find things quickly when you need them so you can spend more time with family and friends.

Source: Adapted from Web MD

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