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How to Declutter Your Home, Room by Room

Whether you tackle it as part of downsizing effort or simply to simplify your life, decluttering an entire home is a big job. The best way to tackle it is in stages—focus on one room, one space, or even one zone within a room (like your kitchen cabinets), completing the job fully before moving on to the next space. This will also build confidence as you experience visible success at each step.

You don't need fancy tools to declutter your home, but you do need five baskets or bins defined for these five purposes:

1. **Put Away:** This container is for items that have crept out of their storage spaces. This could mean a coffee cup in the bathroom or a sweatshirt in the kitchen. These are items that will go back in their designated spots.
2. **Recycle:** This bin is for items that need to be recycled, such as paper, plastic, or glass.
3. **Fix/Mend:** Use this container for items that need further tinkering, such as a pair of shoes that you love but which need to be cleaned.
4. **Trash:** Designate one basket for items that are simply trash—things that can go into the household trash immediately.
5. **Donate:** Designate one bin for items that you can donate to a charitable organization or another person. These should be items you can imagine another person wanting or needing.

You can use bins, baskets, or even just cardboard boxes for this task. Bring these bins into each room as you declutter or leave them in a central place in your home while you work. The important thing is that you don't go hunting for containers while you're decluttering—set up the bins before you begin.

Here are the best ideas on how to use these five bins while decluttering each room in your home.

1 The Bathroom

Start with your medicine cabinet. Take everything out and discard outdated medications, makeup, and skincare products. Put everything you're keeping immediately back into the cabinet, storing the items you use most often at eye level.

Next, move onto any cabinet drawers. Remove everything, do a quick evaluation of what you're keeping and what you're tossing. Put the items you're going to keep back into their drawers, with the items you use most often in the top drawers.

Now, do the same routine with your shower/tub. Finally, pull everything out from below your bathroom sink and declutter the items there.

Lastly, everything that did not have a home can be quickly sorted into the five baskets or bins you have staged for the purpose.

2 The Bedroom

First, make your bed. It's hard to feel any progress decluttering a bedroom while an unmade bed stares you in the face.

Start with your nightstands and remove anything on them that doesn't belong there and put it in your Put Away bin. This may include books you've already finished reading, broken eyeglasses, pens and paper, and mail. Throw out or recycle anything that you no longer use, such as empty tissue boxes, pens that have gone dry, or chargers that no longer work.

Do the same with the tops of your dressers, chests, and/or bureaus. Pay careful attention to any clothing that is strewn about. Anything that needs folding or hanging goes into the Put Away bin. If you're afraid it may wrinkle further, you can lay clothes down on your bed.

Go through each bureau, drawer by drawer. Take everything out. Pull out anything that is no longer worn and put it in your Donation bag or box. Fold and store everything you're keeping.

If you keep a desk or vanity table in your bedroom, tackle that next. Resist the urge to shove things back into drawers; instead, put them in your Put Away bin. Toss or recycle any garbage or anything you haven't used in more than six months.

Return items to their proper places. Fold or hang and store any clothing. If you're now eyeing your closet, we'll tackle that next!

3 Closet and Clothing

OK, deep breath. It's time to tackle your closet. The easiest way to declutter a closet is to first declutter your clothing by type. That means start with shoes, then boots, then dresses, then denim, etc.

It's much easier to decide to toss or keep a pair of jeans if you're looking at your entire jean collection at once. So start pulling out different types of clothing and decide what you'll toss and keep.

Once you've gone through each type of clothing, you will have four piles to deal with:

- Put away anything that was simply in the wrong spot. Example: If you had a pair of socks in your closet, put them in your dresser.
- Put any dirty laundry into the hamper or bring it to the laundry room.
- Anything that needs to be repaired should go to the tailor or dry cleaner.
- Donations and consignments go to a donation centre or a consignment store (either online or a brick and mortar outlet).

4 The Entryways, Mudroom, and Foyer

You may not have a traditional mudroom or foyer, but you definitely have an entryway. No matter how small it is, the best way to make an entryway most functional is to declutter it regularly.

Start with any desk, console, or side tables you have in your entry. Go through each drawer, removing the contents, and make a quick decision to toss or keep each item. Go over the tops of each desk or console as well. Do you have a space for your keys and other important items? Make sure everything is accessible and not too crowded. This will make it easier to leave the house with what you need each morning.

The hall closet should be decluttered like any other closet: Start with shoes and boots, then jackets, followed by accessories.

The entry is another area that picks up a lot of clutter from other rooms. Spend time putting away things from other rooms that have made its way to the entry.

5 The Kitchen

Keeping your kitchen clutter-free can be a challenge because so many different activities occur there—cooking, eating, and socializing. As a result, the kitchen has many different types of items stored in it. You can choose to declutter your kitchen by focusing one category of item at a time (cutting boards, glassware, utensils, or bakeware, for example) or going by zone through each part of the kitchen.

The first step is to completely empty each space, assess each item, and put everything back where it belongs. Start with your powerhouse storage spaces first, such as the pantry and upper cabinets. Then move onto the lower cabinets, drawers, the space under the kitchen sink.

Finally, concentrate on your countertops. Move as many items as possible off of the countertops and into storage spaces. Keep only what you use every single day on the countertops.

Finally, take your Put Away bin and return anything that doesn't belong in the kitchen to its rightful storage space elsewhere in the house.

6 The Living Room

The living room is one of the hardest rooms in your home to keep neat on a daily basis. That's because it gets a lot of use and living rooms don't usually offer a lot of storage features. You may have some bookcases and a TV console, but they don't hide much. The key is to:

- Decide on permanent storage spaces for commonly used items such as remote controls, magazines, and books.
- Declutter this space regularly.

Start with bookcases, console, and side tables. Then move onto your coffee table and entertainment centre. Empty them, assess the items they store and then return them to their proper storage spaces. Put books away, take action on your mail, return remote controls to their proper places, fold blankets, etc.

Move on to electronics. Remove everything that is not connected to your television or home theatre system. Are you using it? Does it work? Store items like chargers, gadgets, and gaming equipment where you use them.

Finally, tackle the toys. Assess every toy for wear and tear. Does it still function? Do your kids still play with it? Recycle or store each toy.

Grab your Put Away bin and return everything that belongs in another room to its proper storage space.

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