



THE COMPLETE HOME DECLUTTERING GUIDE

A Masterplan to Simplify Overwhelming Spaces

Written by Professional Organizers
for the Busy Mom.





Hey There!

We are Errin and Kelly, Co-owners of The Well Ordered Space.

We decided to take our passion for organizing, fueled by our desire to help busy moms find peace amidst the chaos, to the next level! After recognizing that many people lacked the know-how and confidence to declutter effectively, we decided to craft *The Complete Home Decluttering Guide* to provide a step-by-step roadmap to reclaiming living spaces. By breaking down the overwhelming process into manageable steps, our readers are empowered to begin their journey with confidence. We are so excited you are here and can't wait to cheer on your success stories!

Errin + Kelly



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Decluttering Is Not Organizing.

Decluttering is different from organizing. This might sound strange, but they are actually two separate projects. Our mantra is *Never Organize What You Can Declutter*. What do we mean by that?

It's almost always necessary to declutter and edit some things before organizing. Would you buy the perfect basket and fill it with things you don't like or use? Decluttering is also not just shifting those items to other places. It is the physical act of having less. If we have a space that is constantly out of control, it's simply because there is too much.

This is a guide to decluttering, so we'll be saving all those cute containers and systems for another day. In this guide, we're going to teach you some fail-safe ways to declutter any space, no matter how bad you perceive it to be. Really...the concepts can be applied anywhere and with any item. We are genuinely excited that you've taken the first step and can't wait until you feel that momentum after you've tackled your first space!

Side note: You can find our organizing project planner [here](#) when you've completed this guide, have decluttered and are ready to move on to the next phase!

COMMON STRUGGLES

Raise your hand if you:

Let's be real. We all have struggles when it comes to getting started. It helps to identify and acknowledge those roadblocks as to why you really want to do this, but haven't. Checkmark any of the boxes that might apply to you and add any notes or feelings you have about them.

- ☐ **Have too much stuff**
- ☐ **Don't have enough time**
- ☐ **Keep things just in case, out of guilt or because they cost a lot of money**
- ☐ **Have no clear boundaries for rooms in your home**
- ☐ **Have tried before and it didn't work**
- ☐ **Are worried about re-cluttering the space**

NOTES

GOALS

Ideally I Want to Feel

We'll circle back and address those pain points in a bit, but for now, let's talk GOALS! There are so many benefits to reducing clutter in your home, some even scientific. What are your desirable outcomes and anticipated results to decluttering your home?

- ☐ **Relaxed in my home**
- ☐ **Less stressed and anxious**
- ☐ **Improved sleep**
- ☐ **Happier relationships at home**
- ☐ **Money savings by knowing what is on hand**
- ☐ **More in control**
- ☐ **Able to quickly locate frequently needed items**

NOTES

Let's Dive Deeper

Into the Roadblocks

"I am
overwhelmed."

This is probably the number one reason we don't get started. The main goal here is less.

There's. Just. Too. Much. Stuff. The solution? Start small. Choose one small space. Some like to start with a visible space, such as an entryway that guests come through. Others may choose a single junk drawer. Here's the cool thing about starting small...

See progress--> Feel less overwhelmed--> Create momentum

We promise if you go through the steps to declutter that first space, you will create momentum. It will spark a sense of confidence that you have the tools to go on to the next one!

Let's Dive Deeper

Into the Roadblocks

"I don't
have time."

The number two reason we don't get started. You're busy and life itself is overwhelming some days. The thing about time is that there's never the "right time" and there never seems to be enough of it. Your clutter didn't happen overnight and neither will a perfect outcome. Progress > perfection. Find small chunks of time. Even 15-30 minutes a day is enough to make a difference in your house gradually. Prioritize the space that's bugging you the most. Here are some ideas you can do:

- Wake up 15 minutes earlier
- Go to bed 15 minutes later
- Take the kids to a friend or family member for an afternoon
- Identify timewasters and consider replacing one or two of them with time on your project (scrolling social media or the internet or binge-watching TV)

Let's Dive Deeper

Into the Roadblocks

"Just in case."

This one takes a lot of honesty. In most cases, someday might as well mean never.

How likely are you to reupholster that three-legged chair one day? Or bust open those textbooks from college? Bake with that dusty, unboxed bread machine? Will

you really wear those low-rise, pre-pregnancy jeans again? Remember the goal is *less*. Take your moment of power, then and there, and let it go. Ask yourself one question. Would I buy this today?

Let's Dive Deeper

Into the Roadblocks

"It was
expensive."

Also a tough decision. The hard truth is that the money is already gone. And recouping the value is probably not going to happen. It's okay to let go of something you no longer enjoy or find as much value in. That Pottery Barn play kitchen has been collecting dust because your kids have outgrown it. The feeling of generously giving it to another child to love, and have hours of creative play with, is so much better than dwelling on how much it cost while it just sits there. That's not to say that you can't get some monetary return by selling it if you wish! Put it in the sale pile. Just remember to consider your time and energy in selling items and whether or not that sale pile makes you feel unhappy.

Let's Dive Deeper

Into the Roadblocks

"I feel guilty
letting it go."

Then toughest of all...holding on to an item out of guilt. Your mother-in-law crocheted you a pillow that you are *never* going to put on your couch or bed (this one's out of real-life experience). You think about putting it in the donate box but are hit like a truck with guilt. It's handmade and lovely, it took time, *but* it's baby pink and covered in flowers and ducks. Here's the thing about guilt. It's negative.

It's low energy. Change your mindset by thinking about that item bringing joy to someone else. Is the item getting any love sitting buried in your closet? Or would there be someone out there who might really appreciate the art of crochet and have the perfect use for it? Give yourself some grace and remember you don't have to feel responsible for stuff your loved ones gave or left to you...unless you love it or use it in your home. Join the guilt-free club!

Developing a Decluttering Mindset

First, and foremost, it's about having a *present* mindset. You aren't living in the present if you are thinking about holding onto things just in case. This is living in the future. Of course there are reasons to keep things that will definitely serve a family member, such as clothing that they will grow into (in good shape and for the proper season). However, if you can't think of a good reason to hold onto it at that moment, let it go.

Next, it's about accepting the limitations of your space. We like to call it the law of physics. As many times as we've been called fairy godmothers, we can't make things fit into a space that's not big enough. The size of a sock drawer determines how many pairs of socks you can have. A shelf can only comfortably fit so many pairs of shoes or baskets. Even if you *could* fit all those hanging items on the rack, can you comfortably look through your clothes, or are you struggling to see what you have?

Lastly, it's about a change in perspective. Think of it like this...you aren't so much *losing* things, but instead are *choosing* things you use or love. Going through a giant box of your child's whole school career and choosing the best, the cutest, and most treasured is a joy to fit into a nice, neat, and labeled container. And someday they will thank you...

Now It's Time to Take Action

Decide on the space you want to start with. Ideally it's one that bugs you the most, but if that one is overwhelming, opt for something smaller. These next six steps are the action items that you can apply to any space. Yes, it's really this simple!

STEP 1

Get 2 containers and a large trash bag. Label the containers "donate" and "re-home". Items in the re-home container are things you wish to keep, and will need to be distributed back into their correct places.

STEP 2

Get rid of evident trash. This is easy... we're talking gum wrappers, expired coupons, and broken crayons.

STEP 3

Locate things that you *do* want to keep, but that *don't* belong in that space and put them in the re-home basket.

STEP 4

Locate things that you don't want or need. These are usable things that you can make a quick decision on and put them in donate.

STEP 5

At this point, you should be left with only things that would actually make sense in this space. It is not about how many you *should* have, but how many will *fit* in the container, drawer, shelf or cabinet. The substeps:

- a) Group all like items together ie. all spatulas in a pile
- b) Edit any duplicates. We are looking to keep the best, the favorite, and the necessary. If it's in bad shape, it's probably trash. If it's in good shape AND a duplicate, put it in donate.
- c) Finally, put the items back into the space starting with the best, the favorite and the necessary. If the space is full and there are still more items, take another pass to make sure you aren't keeping duplicates.

STEP 6

Finally, take your re-home basket and distribute items to their rightful places. Throw out trash/recycle. Set donate items in the car or near the door to drop off.

Let's Check In

If you are struggling, ask yourself
these discovery questions

Keep — Trash — Donate ?

Does this fit my
current clothing or
decor style?

Am I honoring this
item or simply afraid
to let it go?

Will I actually
repair this item
for use?

Would I
repurchase this
item?

Could this benefit
someone else more
than me?

Have I used
this item in the
past year?

I feel really
compelled to keep
this, what can I part
with instead?

Does this make sense
for me to keep?

Keeping Things in Control

The first step in keeping control is to acknowledge that decluttering needs to be a part of our daily routine. This is critical to understand in order to maintain your time and hard work investment. When we say daily, we don't mean the six steps to a whole decluttering session. We mean taking the junk mail straight to the recycle or putting the dinner dishes into the dishwasher at night. The small things just add to the large things and slow you down from attacking the real clutter.

- Consider keeping a donation box somewhere accessible, but out of sight. This is handy to toss unwanted items into. Once it's full, it's time to make a donation drop.
- Set clear boundaries for your rooms. It's inevitable that children will drag toys into all rooms of the house and that's life! However, those things can turn into general clutter in large amounts. Having a clean-up game at the end of the day can help keep things under control. Setting the expectation that it's fine to play with toys anywhere, but they live in the XYZ room and go back at the end of the play day.

Keeping Things in Control

- Do a daily reset of your home. Before going to bed in the evening, put your home to bed so you are greeted by clear surfaces and spaces in the morning. Clean up toys, put away laundry, clear kitchen surfaces. Grab that laundry basket and gather up all the things that need to be re-homed again. Don't let them sit in the basket. Instead, carve out the time to put each item away. This gets faster as it becomes a habit!
- Use the one in, one out rule. This is a great rule for keeping things under control. For example, you have a drawer for leggings and it's already pretty full. If you are going to bring a new pair in, look through the others and see if there's at least one that can go. You might even find a few. Remember... in full spaces, we only want to keep the favorite, the best, and the necessary.
- Buy with intention. New things will come in and that's a fact. If you are going to change the decor in your living room, think ahead about what you plan to do with the old items. Remember the goals for your home and be mindful of the space!

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Decluttering with Kids

Our experience through the years has shown that kids actually love organization. Decluttering can be a little more challenging alongside your kiddos. However, we will tell you that children are uncreative in a room overflowing with toys. Many times, they don't even want to play in there. Playing is children's work!

When it's too full of choices and chaotic, they are overwhelmed. How many times have you heard a child come to say they are bored while standing in a playroom packed with toys?

When you have a limited container (shelf, drawer) for toys or books, they can help. We use the same concepts. We find the trash, the things that don't belong there, and things we no longer want, first. Then have them pick their favorites first and start filling the container. Whatever is left and won't fit has to go. Believe it or not, this works!

(It's also totally okay to go in after hours with a black trash bag and smuggle out items yourself. :)

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Decluttering with Spouses

Sometimes it's only one spouse that's bothered by clutter. We get you. If your partner is resistant to decluttering, we advise starting with your own stuff. Then move on to neutral areas such as the living room, kitchen, and laundry room.

Sometimes the other partner does not want his or her things touched. As hard, annoying, and (pick your word) as it is, it's usually not worth the power struggle. Many times the resistant spouse will see the progress, feel the benefits, and be persuaded to give it a try.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Moving

Please, oh please, don't move your old trash into your new home. We promise you will be sorry (and might even say a cuss word) when you open boxes of stuff you don't even really want. This will cost you precious time and time is money. Speaking of money, extra moving boxes equals more money in a mover's pocket. Or a bigger Uhaul to pay for. Moving is already stressful so do yourself a favor and do the work on the front end. We recommend starting well before you begin to pack, decluttering a whole room before moving on to the next. If you can't, you can still go through the steps, only now you are decluttering as you pack. Drop off all donations before you begin the move. A clean move is key to getting settled in quickly! Three helpful questions to ask:

1

Does this décor fit the style of my new home?

2

Can I fit this many XYZ into the new space?

3

Have I used this item in the last calendar year?

4

Is this item broken beyond repair, expired, or simply in bad shape?

Reflect

FIVE EMPOWERING QUESTIONS

What is one thing I've learned about myself in this process?

Which of the roadblocks do I identify with the most?

Who is one person I can call to help support me with my goals?

What is one relationship that might benefit from decluttering?

What are three items I can let go of today?

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