

# How to Clutter Clear

A checklist for time-poor but health-conscious homemakers

Mess creates stress. Being surrounded by 'stuff' that has no meaning for you stifles your energy and dampens enthusiasm. It is the interiors equivalent of a to-do list that is never completed. Yet apparently 21% of us struggle to get rid of stuff. So, here's a 12 step checklist to help you clear anything that's unfit for purpose, doesn't contribute to your sense of beauty or play a happy part in your personal story.



## 1 THIS IS NOT ABOUT MINIMALISM

**Your things should be seen as the talismans of your life, with all its glorious ups and downs, twists and turns. And your home is your safe space to display them without judgement.** In my opinion, minimalism is a physical manifestation of an emotional state that seeks to negate many aspects of the self. For some this is necessary; a brave clean slate. But for most of us, our past *makes* our present, and if we jettison too many of the things that represent that past in later life I believe it denies a crucial part of our evolution. For sure, don't keep the framed photograph of your ex, but the picture bought while you were together that you still love? Keep your things, just be sure you really love them, and/or use them regularly. Anything else is 'stuff' aka clutter, and this is what we need to get rid of.



## 2 START SLOWLY

**Think 5-minute bursts of clearing.** The aim at the beginning is to identify which of the things around you really resonate for you? What do you no longer need (books you'll not read again? DVDs? Cheque books!), use (that ice-cream maker?), or love (the vase your mother-in-law gave you). Box or bag and take them to your nearest charity store. Your trash could be someone else's treasure. Caveats: get relinquished items out of the house straight away, don't leave them to languish. And anything you're not sure about, leave exactly it where it is. Every time you reopen that closet or drawer and see it again, you'll be clearer about how you feel. And maybe you'll decide you definitely want to keep it, and that's ok.



## 3 STOP SHOPPING!

**There has to be less coming in than going out.** Not for a while or a week, but for the long-term. Clutter clearing in its purest form begets intentional consumerism. Buying less but better (for planet and people), which can be a lot less than you think!

#### **4 WEED OUT THE ANNOYING STUFF**

**The ultimate goal is consistent considered curation — limiting the distractions while increasing that which supports you.** Anything broken, jugs that dribble, chipped crockery (they can harbour bacteria), the dressing gown you're embarrassed to answer the door in, the permanently stained cushion cover. If it can't be mended right this minute with a needle and thread or some super glue, or be somehow pimped back to life with dye or artistic appliqué (that you're actually prepared to do!), then it has to go.

#### **5 RELINQUISH MULTIPLES**

**Do you really need four sets of salad servers and six wooden spoons?**

Multiples of things like printer cartridges, batteries, bulbs, towels and toilet rolls makes sense. Multiples of most other things do not unless you have a vast amount of storage and can take advantage of bulk purchase deals. Nonetheless, I maintain that one (packet of biscuits, box of tissues, set of bedlinen) in use and one spare is a mantra that works for much in life.

#### **6 LET GO OF UNWANTED GIFTS, WITHOUT GUILT!**

**We often feel obliged to keep unwanted gifts because we appreciate the effort involved in their purchase.** However, unless the giver is particularly good at accessing exactly what you love or need, they can quickly become weights not wanted. We need to tackle this in two ways. First, if there's something you really desire, then head off unwanted gifts at the pass and ask for a contribution. If there's nothing you need, or want, why not suggest a lovely lunch together. Experiences and memories trump unnecessary possessions every time. This is especially pertinent at Christmas when we can become very stressed searching for random tat that nobody needs. Spend your time, and money, more meaningfully.

#### **7 BIN THE JUST-IN-CASE ITEMS**

**You cannot live your life based on a wholly unquantifiable expectation of the future.** Have faith that whatever happens you'll be able to deal with it, and you won't need 14 saved margarine pots to do so. And for those that say, 'Oh but I threw something away and needed it the very next day!' Well that would be annoying but it is also just a coincidence and not a reason to stop clearing. Chances are, it wouldn't have been the right shape, size or have the correct nozzle anyway.

#### **8 FORGO THE SALES!**

**Things on sale are usually there because no-one wanted them in the first place.** So why are you buying them? The only way to work the sales is if you have a *pre-determined list* of things you wish to upgrade, and this might be your chance to get them at reduced price. Otherwise, give sales a wide berth as it's a strong will indeed that can search and not be seduced. An exception might be a visit to a very favourite store in pursuit of a considered treat — an act of self-gifting for a personal achievement. Nevertheless, it's still worth asking yourself whether an experience rather than a purchase might be a more enjoyable reward. A weekend away? Special theatre tickets? A meal in a fancy new restaurant?

## FINAL CLUTTER BUSTING TIPS

### 9. SHOP MORE MINDFULLY

Essentially this is about not succumbing to a feeling of lack — that you are missing out, or that your life will only be complete with the purchase of a must-have item as declared by someone you don't know. Instead, lean into what you are gaining by saving your money, more time, more resources, more freedom.

### 10. TAKE YOUR TIME

Do not feel compelled to do this all in one go. Sometimes it's important to sit with things for a while; to contemplate what they meant to you and to take the time to decide whether that is still true. Clutter clearing is also not something that you will do only once. As life evolves you will find that the constant evaluation of your possessions becomes a habit. Every time you open a cupboard or drawer the hope is to be able to actively contemplate the true value of their contents, and it will be easier to let any extraneous things go.

### 11. IT'S NOT ABOUT EXTRA STORAGE!

Installing extra closets, investing in 'organising' compartments for your fridge, fitting extra drawers under absolutely anything just invites the filling of them. Neatly dividing what you already own and then distributing it stealthily around your home is not the way. You need to actively dispense with stuff not just hide'n'tidy it.

### 12. SMALL CHANGES COMPOUND

Little by little you will let go of more items until you are convinced that every single thing that surrounds you is an active player in the story you wish to tell. Clearing the clutter and living with less, means less stress and space for more: more time, more creativity, more experiences, more contentment, and more peace. Because, sooner or later we all realise that life's important things aren't things at all.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this. Now act on it! I really want you to experience the joy of a happy, healthy, cleared therefore supportive home.**

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This guide is a small introduction to a bigger idea: that your home is not just where you live, but something that actively shapes how you feel, think and function.

I explore this philosophy more deeply on my Substack, [Better Home Better Health with Michelle Ogundehin](#) where I share research, reflections and practical ways to support your wellbeing through your space. It's free to subscribe.

And inside the Happy Insiders Club, we put it into practice — working together through monthly Room and Mood Resets, guided tools and a supportive community to help you create a home that truly supports you.

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