

8 Weeks to a Less Cluttered Home

Why declutter?

Clutter comes with a price. It may not be immediately obvious to us, but the more stuff that we accumulate, the more that our things begin to demand of us.

What is your clutter demanding of you?

- Time and energy. You spend time cleaning, tidying, re-organizing, putting things back where they belong, dusting and more.
- Space. Stuff needs to be stored somewhere. This might mean that your rooms are more crowded, your cupboards overflowing, or perhaps you have to own extra shelves, dressers, and bins to hold it.
- Hard-earned money. Are you paying to fix things? Buying more storage bins or baskets or shelves? Or even paying for storage units? What about a larger house to hold it all?
- Peace. It's hard to keep a lot of stuff consistently tidy and neat. When our homes are untidy, or our surfaces cluttered with things, it's harder to relax and enjoy yourself. Clutter distracts us and makes it more difficult to find rest and refreshment.
- Efficiency. I don't know about you, but my brain doesn't work well when I'm in a cluttered environment. It's more difficult to think clearly, to work quickly and efficiently, and to focus on the tasks at hand. Clutter slows me down.

This fall, [my husband and I began to go through our possessions](#), attempting to really clear out the unnecessary items as much as possible. We got rid of almost 2 van loads of stuff, which is hard to believe. Even harder to believe is the fact that we don't miss any of it. At all. Instead, we found that we enjoy being in our home more, and we spend less time cleaning and maintaining things. Having less proved to be a very, very good thing.

So good, in fact, that we're not finished yet. This summer we'll be going through our home in a detailed, step-by-step decluttering process. **Over the course of 8 weeks, or 40 days (not including weekends), we want to purposefully assess each area of our house and our possessions, and pare down to what we truly need, use and love.** Everything else? It will be sold at a garage sale, donated to others, or taken to the dump as a last resort.

Are you eager to free yourself from the demands of your material possessions, so that you can fully enjoy and engage in the parts of your life that are most important? Relationships with family and friends, time spent with the Lord, serving and giving to others, opening your home for

hospitality, having time for creativity, for rest, and for purposefully pursuing the things you are most passionate about. When we free ourselves from "stuff", we have so much more to give to the things that really matter.

Will you join us in 40 days of decluttering our homes?



40 Days: A Plan for Decluttering

The goal: To spend 30 minutes or less each day working on a specific area of the home
AND To find 10 items to get rid of each day

At the end of 40 days, we can expect to be released from 400 things (40 x 10) that we don't need... can you imagine the effect that this will have on your home and life?!

I do realize, though, that it's summer. We want to be outdoors, enjoying time spent with loved ones, soaking up some sun, and having a whole lot of fun making memories. I don't want to spend days or weeks cooped up in my house as I sort through what we own. That's why I created a plan to work through my house very systematically, but in 30 minutes or less per day. There might be the odd task that is a more daunting one for you and it will require more time. On the other hand, some of these tasks will be a piece of cake for you, and could be finished in 10 minutes flat. On average, most tasks shouldn't take more than 30 minutes, and the areas that I think will require extra time have been broken down into bite-sized or multi-day tasks.

Feel free to switch around days to make this work with your schedule. If you know that a particular closet or bedroom or area like the garage is going to be a huge chore, plan that for a day or week when you're committed to putting in the time. You can switch some of the lighter tasks to weeks when you really want to be free from extra household work. If two tasks are short and simple for you, combine them into one day and then take a day off. Double up on tasks for a week to get through some of the work faster if you'll be going away on vacation. **In other words, make it work for you!**

The point of this plan is to give you a very specific and tangible plan to follow, so that no part of your house or belongings are missed in the process. The hard part of portioning the tasks out is already done for you, making it easier for you to simply jump in and begin!

Some tips before you get started:

1. Determine an area of the house where you will store all of the things that you are decluttering. This could be in your garage, a corner of the basement, or maybe (like me) a guest bedroom that isn't frequently used. You'll need to have enough space to store a good number of boxes and bags, and to be able to separate things into sell, give, and trash piles.
2. Find some large boxes (the type that you would use if you were packing to move), as well as plenty of garbage bags. If you don't have any boxes, you can often go to a local grocery store or restaurant (fast food restaurants are a great source for this) and ask for boxes that they are planning to recycle. Aim to have at least 5-10 large boxes, possibly more (depending on how much you think that you will be getting rid of). You can add to these boxes as you go, then use them for **bringing items to donation centers or for organizing garage sale items. When you're done with them, just fold them down and recycle.**
3. Print out this list and take a look at the various tasks. Compare it to your summer calendar and see if there are any days you need to plan to combine, vacation weeks you need to account for, etc. Basically, just figure out how this will fit into your schedule. Once you've done this, put your list up on the fridge, where you will see it daily and have easy access to it.
4. Cross off tasks on the list as you go. This will help you to track what you have and haven't done, of course, but it will also provide encouragement and motivation as you see how much you've already done and you feel a sense of momentum to keep going and complete the plan.
5. As you work, through the items in your house, here are 3 questions to keep in mind. These questions are inspired by the book [Organized Simplicity](#) by Tsh Oxendreider, which is a fabulous book for those really wanting to delve more into the why's and how's behind creating and maintaining a simpler home and lifestyle.
 - Is this beautiful?
 - Is this useful?
 - Do I really think it's worth it to have this in my home? (Worth the cost, space, maintenance, time and energy, etc.)
6. If you think that you will want to have a garage sale when you are finished (and I recommend that you do), plan the date now. That will give you the motivation to stay on target and finish on time, and also help you to prepare for your garage sale to make it the best it can be (invite other friends/families to join you, make signs, advertise in a local paper, etc.).
7. **Tips for clothing:** When you go to declutter your clothing (or your kids' clothes) a few things to keep in mind are: don't keep items that you haven't worn in 6 months to 1 year

(unless they are maternity clothes, or your regular clothes, for those moms who are in the midst of various sizes), don't keep things that need repair (unless you actually make a plan to repair them in a short period of time), and try things on if you're not sure. Consider a "maybe" box to help you to avoid being indecisive with items you aren't sure about. Stick them in the "maybe" pile and then take a look at them again before you make your final decisions at the end of the 40 days. Chances are, you'll realize that you don't really want to keep most of those items, and the ones that you really do want will stand out to you. For children's clothing, if there are younger siblings that will wear hand-me-downs, carefully store the items that their older siblings have outgrown, but only keep your favourites and those things that are truly in good, wearable condition. If you loved that cute pink shirt, but it has stains that you never were able to get out, let it go. There will be plenty of other cute things to wear. :)

Are you ready? Let's begin!



The 40 Day Plan

1. Kitchen drawers- Cutlery and cooking utensils.
2. Kitchen cupboards- All cupboards with eating dishes (plates, glasses, china, wine glasses, etc.) and storage containers (like Tupperware or Pyrex containers).
3. Kitchen cupboards- All cupboards with cooking items (pots, pans, casserole dishes, baking trays or pans) as well as small appliances (blenders, food processors, toaster ovens, etc.).
4. Kitchen drawers- Any junk or miscellaneous drawers.
5. Kitchen linens- Dish towels, cloths, rags, oven mitts, napkins, tablecloths, placemats.
6. Kitchen "other"- Water bottles, reusable bags, lunch boxes and containers, cleaning supplies, anything else you store in the kitchen that isn't covered somewhere else on the list.
7. Kitchen cookbooks and recipes.
8. Videos, DVDs and CDs.
9. Your desk or work area. This might be an actual desk (mine is a desk unit with doors that close), but wherever you keep your files or important, notepaper, or take messages if you don't have a desk.
10. Childrens books- Day 1
11. Childrens books- Day 2. I need 2 days because of our large library of books for

homeschooling. If you don't need 2 days, use this extra day to clean out your purse or diaper bag.

12. Adult books- Day 1
13. Adults book- Day 2. Again, if you don't need a second day, use this day to do some fridge cleaning or organization.
14. Medicine or vitamin/home remedies cabinet or cupboard. You could also tackle your First Aid kit on this day.
15. Children's art work, certificates, special notes or cards, etc.
16. Magazines and newspapers.
17. Decorative items in living areas (living room, family room, dining room, kitchen).
18. Furniture. Walk through the house and, room by room, assess whether there are unnecessary furniture items that can be removed. Either move them into your "stuff" storage area today OR make a list of the items that need to be dealt with as you prepare for your garage sale, donations, etc. at the end of the 40 days.
19. Clothing- Kids dresser(s)- Day 1.
20. Clothing- Kids dresser(s)- Day 2. If you don't need a 2nd day, use today to organize/clean your freezer, or get a jump start on the bedroom closets if you think those will take you extra time.
21. Clothing- Kids closet(s)- Day 1.
22. Clothing- Kids closet(s)- Day 2. If you don't need a second day for this, give yourself a break. You've been working hard! :)
23. Clothing- Master bedroom closet.
24. Clothing- Master bedroom dresser(s).
25. Bathroom #1. Towels, cupboards, drawers, toiletries, empty bottles- anything you can think of.
26. Bathroom #2. Same as yesterday, but different bathroom. If you have a 3rd bathroom in your home, combine it with whichever other bathroom you think will go the fastest.
27. Entry, hall or mudroom closet (where you keep jackets, winter gear, backpacks, etc.).
28. Shoes. Remove any that no longer fit (store for younger children, if necessary), are in unwearable condition, have been missing a mate for a significant period of time, or that you simply don't like or wear.
29. Garage- Day 1. If you don't have a garage, this could be your attic, a storage closet, etc.
30. Garage- Day 2. If you don't need a second day for the garage, use this day to tidy your front or back porch.
31. Craft or sewing supplies. You could also use this day to go through other hobby-related

items: scrapbooking, painting, knitting, photography-- whatever it is that you do.

32. Laundry room.
33. Linen closet. Bedsheets and pillowcases, throw blankets, any other linens that you haven't gone through yet.
34. Backyard shed. Tools, gardening supplies, outdoor or sports equipment, camping gear, etc.
35. Homeschool supplies OR kid's school supplies and backpacks.
36. Holiday supplies and decorations (includes Christmas ornaments and decor, as well as other holidays, and you could also include things like gift wrap).
37. Kids toys- Day 1. Go through everything yourself first (without the kids), getting rid of things that are broken, missing important parts, that are no longer age appropriate, etc.
38. Kids toys- Day 2. Now invite your children to join you and have them help to choose which things to give away or sell, and which things they would like to keep.
39. Closets- are there any that haven't been tackled yet? If the closets are finished, what about night tables in bedrooms? This might be a good day to take a final look through each bedroom to see if there are any items other than clothes, books, toys, etc. that you didn't catch earlier.
40. Any area of your home that hasn't been addressed yet. OR use this as a catch-up day for a task that took longer than you thought it would. OR, if you're done decluttering, use this day to begin to organize your garage sale and donation items.

As you go, **remember that your goal is to choose at least 10 items per day to get rid of.** Some days, you'll easily find more than this, and some days you won't find that many. But either way, it can be helpful to have a number in the back of your head to aim for as you go through the process.

You're done! You did an amazing job. Breathe a deep sigh of relief (or maybe shout for joy!) that your home has become significantly less cluttered.

Can you feel the difference in the peacefulness and spaciousness of your home? Are already enjoying the benefits of owning less things?



What to do with all that STUFF?

If you plan to have a garage sale or want to sell your things:

- As you go along, make sure that you are sorting things into their appropriate piles-- things

to sell, things to give or donate, and things to throw away. This makes it easier when it comes time to organize your items to be sold.

- During the week or days before your garage sale, begin to price your items. The best way to do it is to individually price each item using stickers (most dollar stores sell small stickers with prices like \$0.10, \$0.50, \$1, \$2, etc. already printed on them). You can also use masking tape. Another option is to separate items into boxes by price, so create a \$0.25 cent box, a \$1 box, etc. But, you'll probably find that the sale itself is easier to run if everything has a specific price right on it, so people don't have to wonder or ask you about each item.
- Put anything that isn't really worth much or that is in need of slight repair into a "FREE" box to put out at the sale.
- For those items that are worth more (electronics, baby gear, small appliances, furniture, etc.), make a list and determine what amount of money you would like to sell them for. Mark them appropriately for your garage sale, and if you can't get an amount that you are happy with, hold on to those items to list on Craigslist or Kijiji. Another way to approach it is to try listing them for sale as soon as you determine you want to sell them. If you haven't sold them by the time your garage sale happens, then it makes it easier to sell them for less now that you have a better idea of their market value.

After the sale (or if you don't plan to have one at all):

- As you're going through your stuff, make sure that things that are actually broken, stained, etc. get put into a trash pile, rather than a sell or donate pile. You don't want to give away stuff that isn't actually useful to anyone.
- Find a local place to donate, whether it's a Goodwill, Value Village, Salvation Army, or any other type of second-hand store. If you can find one that supports a non-profit organization or ministry that you would like to help, all the better.
- Before you pack up your stuff to drop off, call and double check which types of items they will and won't accept. Many types of baby items (like cribs, carseats, etc.) are not accepted by any donation centers for liability reasons, and things like furniture and appliances really vary from place to place. You may find that you need to take things to a couple of different places in order to get rid of everything you've set aside.
- Pack things up as neatly as you can, and then drop them off during their drop off hours. Whatever won't be accepted by any donation centres will probably have to be taken to the dump, unless it is made of something that is recyclable. If it's a larger item, like an appliance or piece of furniture, it's worthwhile to list it for free somewhere like Craigslist first, as often someone will be willing to take it off your hands, which keeps one more item out of the landfills and makes your load a little lighter as well.

Now that your home is under control...

It does take some work to keep it this way. If you go back to your old habits, things are likely to start piling up again and you don't want that to happen. **Every time you go to buy something or bring something new into your home**, consider the same questions as when you were decluttering:

1. Is this beautiful?
2. Is this useful?
3. Do I really think it's worth it to have this in my home?

The more that you can train yourself to make these considerations BEFORE you bring something into your house, the easier it will get to maintain the peacefulness and freedom from stuff that you have just worked so hard to achieve.

And remember, this isn't a permanent solution. You'll still have to take time to declutter occasionally, to maintain this new clutter-free environment you've created, but it gets easier with time. You've done the really hard job already, after all!

Now relax. ***And enjoy living life in your decluttered home.***

