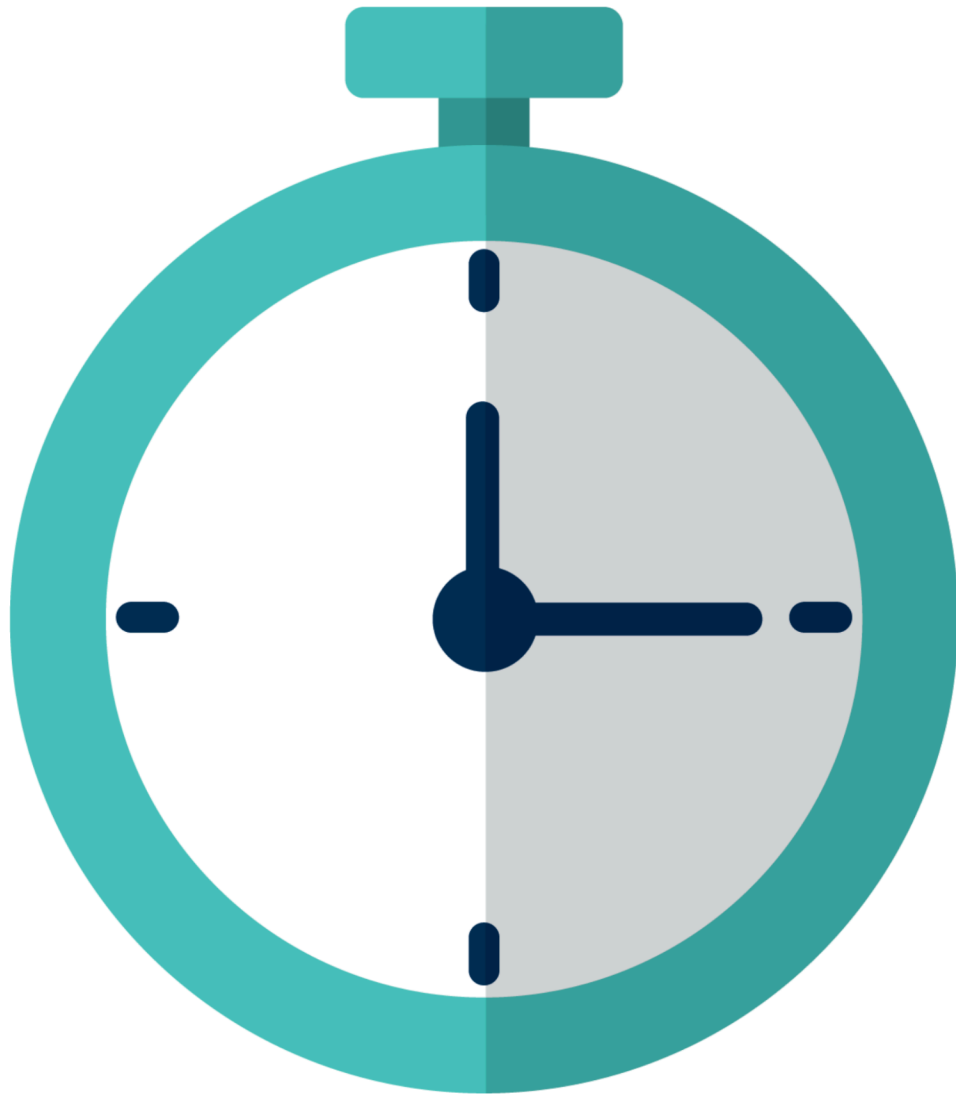


DECLUTTER IN MINUTES!



A Room-by-Room Guide
to Decluttering Your Home

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DECLUTTER IN MINUTES

A Room-By-Room Guide To Decluttering Your Home

Decluttering an entire home can be a pretty daunting task—so much so that many of us throw our hands up in frustration shortly after beginning.

Sometimes it is easier to just close the door and ignore the mess that is hiding behind it.

Does this sound like you?

You tell yourself this weekend you are finally going to do it—get that back room completely cleaned out once and for all. You wake up early and walk in armed with a supply of boxes and bags. You dig in to the mess, randomly grabbing items, tossing things into boxes, and creating piles.

After working for a solid hour, you look around and notice things now look worse than they did before!

You think, why am I doing this?

I just don't have time right now!

I should just let it go and do it next year when things will be slower, less busy.

I understand, you have a lot going on! You have so much on your plate right now that adding a huge chore like cleaning out your entire home or even just a room may seem impossible.

That is the exactly why I wrote this book.

To help the busy person just like you finally declutter their home all in one minute at a time.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This little, yet incredibly powerful book is laid out just for you—the person that has a lot going on and little time to spare.

I have sectioned it off into rooms/chapters so you can pick and choose where to begin. And to make things even more convenient, I have listed decluttering tasks for each room/chapter in time slots of 5 minutes, 10 minutes, or 20 minutes.

I also have a box next to each decluttering task that you can check off as you complete it.

Proof of progress is a powerful thing!

At the end of this book, you will find a few of my best and favorite tips for decluttering your home—just a few tricks I’ve learned during my years of removing the mess.

Finally, I have included a few printables at the very end that are meant to help you after the clutter is gone. There are forms you can print out and use to set up systems in your newly decluttered rooms—systems that will ensure your rooms stay cleaned out and organized. I also have a few bonus forms that you can use to incorporate decluttering projects and tasks into your schedule as you learn to declutter as you go.

Now you can finally declutter on your own terms by fitting small tasks into your schedule. You will be able to sort and organize areas of your home in minutes rather than days.

And remember, each task will build on the other, creating a ripple effect that will spread throughout your entire home.

So, are you ready to finally have the home you always dreamed of?

Let’s get started!

Tracy Lynn 

The Master Bedroom

When I talk to brand new decluttering students, their first question always is, “where do I start?” You might be surprised to find that my answer most often is in the master bedroom.

Most of us want instant results, and while that is nice to have, it is unrealistic when faced with decluttering an entire home. I would instead encourage you to focus on a room that will be the easiest to keep decluttered and tidy. And since most of us are the only ones that have access to our bedrooms, if things do get out of hand, we usually are the ones to blame.

Another reason why I love to begin in the master bedroom is to create a place of constant peace and calm. A bedroom should be a shelter—a room you can depend on to give you sanctuary from a chaotic day.

When you fall into bed at night are you surrounded by mess and piles? Bags and boxes? Dust and clutter? And if so, are you waking up rested?

Probably not.

If the last thing you see before you shut your eyes is mess, clutter, and chaos, and the first thing you see in the morning is again mess, clutter, and chaos, then it is only natural that you will wake up stressed before the day even begins.

Setting your room up to be a peaceful haven will be your game changer. Wouldn't you love to climb into a neat and tidy bed next to an organized nightstand holding your journal and a few of your favorite books? And then wake up with the sun shining through clean windows onto organized dresser tops?

Sound good? Great...let's make that happen!

5 Minutes:

Trash: Always remove the trash to see just exactly what clutter you are dealing with. Easy to do and super effective too!

1. Take two bags with you for this task—one bag is for trash, the other is for recyclables.

2. Immediately take both bags out of your home when finished.

□ **Dirty Clothes:** If your family is anything like mine, then you just might have random items of clothing scattered about your home. Take a few minutes to gather those items up now and take them immediately to your laundry room.

□ **The Bed:** Not normally something you would expect to declutter, but that is just where we will start! Keep your bed from becoming a catch all. From now on, give this item in your room an off-limits sign in your mind. Do not fold clothes on it or toss things on it. Keep it free from clutter from this day on. You will be amazed what a difference this one tip will make in your room!

1. Clean off anything that does not belong. Put dirty clothes in the hamper, clean clothes away, and items for other rooms into a pile to be dealt with later.
2. Check pillows and blankets. Are they in good shape? If not, get those items on your shopping list.
3. Make your bed. From here on in have a rule—last one to get up is responsible for making the bed.

□ **Jewelry:** This is an area that is rarely decluttered but can become a mess so quickly if we do not keep an eye on things.

1. Remove all of your jewelry one piece at a time into three piles as you go:
 - Love
 - Like
 - Can part with
2. Remove any pieces that are worn or broken beyond repair.
3. Clean your jewelry box/bin/basket, removing any dust.
4. Set up things so they are neat, easy to use, and organized.
5. Put the pieces you love back.
6. If you have room, you may also put back the pieces you like.
7. Sort the pieces you can part with into 3 piles:
 - Worth money – take to a pawnshop or jeweler.
 - Large fun pieces for your kids to use for dress up.
 - Pieces you can donate.
8. If you have expensive pieces, choose specific storage containers that will keep them safe from dust and corrosion.

□ **Undergarments:** Not a place most of us declutter, but one that should be on your quarterly to-do list.

1. Gather up all your unmentionables and lay them out onto your bed.
2. Remove any pieces that are torn, stained, stretched, or you haven't worn in ages. Toss these rather than donate for obvious reasons.
3. Wipe down the drawer or bin you use to hold your items.
4. Put back those pieces you have decided to keep.

□ **Knickknacks:** I feel that a few photos and treasured items deserve a spot in our bedrooms. However, too much can make decluttering this room next to impossible. Dedicate one shelf to holding a few items that have the most meaning and consider removing the rest.

Place extra items in another room, or if you are no longer in love with them, donate so someone else can find joy in your collectables.

10 Minutes:

□ **Temporary Clutter:** It amazes me how quickly things can accumulate in a room—things that do not belong, but ones you don't want to purge either. I call this dislocated clutter. It is temporary clutter that simply needs to be put away. To help prevent this from happening in the future, I have included an extra step with this task that you don't want to miss!

1. Use a clothes basket to make this task much easier.
2. Gather up all the items that do not belong and put them into the basket.
3. Take a stroll around your home and put any items from your basket back where they belong.
4. Set up a bin, basket, tote, or box in your room to toss these items into as you come across them. This will be known as your "Catch All Bin." Each week, empty your catch all bin to keep it from overflowing.

□ **Night Stand:** I love the nightstand, and when you have it set up with everything you need to help you get to sleep, you will love it too!

1. Clean off the top of your stand and sort into piles:
 - Keep
 - Toss
 - Put away
 - Donate

2. Clean out the drawers, sorting as you go.
3. Wipe off the top and inside of your stand. Don't forget the back and sides.
4. Decide what you need to help you fall asleep and anything you might need in the middle of the night. Things like:
 - Tissues
 - Journal/pen
 - Books/magazines
 - Hand lotion
 - Foot lotion
 - Lamp
 - Flashlight
 - Medications (please keep safe from young children)
 - Coaster for a glass of water
5. Put everything back ensuring you can easily access anything in the dark if needed.

☐ Shoes: Who doesn't love shoes?! Unfortunately, they can overtake us quickly if we do not keep them in check.

1. Remove all the shoes from your closet, creating three different piles:
 - Love
 - Like
 - Can part with
2. As you are sorting, remove any shoes that are beyond repair. Put them in a bag to toss.
3. Keep in mind how much room you have as you are sorting your shoes.
4. Select an area in your closet for storing shoes, and gather any tools you can use to help organize this area better. Some ideas:
 - A shoe rack
 - A hanging shoe organizer
 - A small bookshelf you can use to put shoes on
 - A tote (Be careful not to ruin or scuff shoes if you chose this option.)
5. Put back the shoes you are keeping. Donate what you can part with and any shoes that do not fit.

☐ Dresser Tops: There is nothing that helps declutter a room more than a bare dresser top. I used to keep so many items piled high on each of our dressers. Once I removed everything, it set the tone for the rest of the room. We loved the feeling so

much that we upped our game and removed our dressers completely, housing all of our clothing in our closet.

1. Sorting as you go is the easiest way to tackle this area.
2. Remove any trash and toss immediately.
3. Remove any random items that belong in other areas of the home to be put away when you are finished up.
4. Gather any jewelry, and set up a place to hold your pieces where they will be better protected—in your closet or in a jewelry box or case. You can use a small bowl next to your bed for holding rings.
5. Put all the change into a jar or bank.
6. Grooming items can be better kept in the bathroom or your nightstand.
7. Knickknacks should be few and far between in a bedroom. Consider hanging a shelf to hold a few and keep your dresser top clean.
8. Consider keeping medications in your bathroom or a cabinet in the kitchen.
9. Perfumes should be kept in the bathroom as well.

If you are short on space and depend on this area to help out, then you will want to set things up so they are organized and not cluttered. Create a system that you will easily use so things stay neat and tidy.

20 Minutes:

□ Under the Bed: I love to use this area to store off-season clothing. It's an out of the way place, yet still simple to get to and is a great way to free up space in your crowded closet.

1. Remove everything from under the bed.
2. Make piles as you go:
 - Toss
 - Put away in another room
 - Donate
3. Vacuum under your bed and do any dusting that is needed.
4. Decide what this area will be used for:
 - Storage of seasonal clothing
 - Storage of other items
 - Nothing – if below the bed is easily seen.
5. Put away the items you have sorted into piles above.
6. Seal up your donation box and put into your car.
7. Take out the trash.

□ **Closet:** Purging and organizing an entire closet will take most of us a full day. To make things just a bit easier, let's do an initial declutter and borrow the hanger trick for the rest. Autopilot declutter, I love it!

1. Go through your hanging clothes quickly, removing anything you can see you no longer want.
2. Toss anything that is stained or torn, and donate the rest.
3. For the clothes that are remaining, turn the hangers around so they are all facing the wrong way.
4. Once you wear an item and are putting it back into your closet, turn the hanger around so it is facing the right way.
5. After several months take a look at whichever hangers are still facing the WRONG way. These are clothes you no longer wear.
6. Go through these clothes and donate as many as you are comfortable.
7. Every few months, repeat this process until your closet is fully decluttered.

The Kitchen

For most homes, the kitchen is the hub of the home. The heart. The centerpiece. It is where family and friends gather to share food and stories. Where children do homework and dinners are eaten. Where bills are paid and projects are planned.

For that reason, having a neat and organized kitchen sets the scene for the rest of the home. If you can clean out and clean up this one room, organizing the rest of your home will be simple.

5 Minutes:

Trash: Always remove the trash to see just exactly what clutter you are dealing with. Easy to do and super effective too!

1. Take two bags with you for this task—one bag is for trash, the other is for recyclables.
2. Immediately take both bags out of your home when finished.

Plastic Shopping Bags: It amazes me how the things multiply! Having bags is good, and you should have a few around when you need them. Having so many bags that they are scattered throughout your home is more than you need.

1. Gather up all but a few shopping bags, putting them all into one bag. Put these bags into your car, so the next time you are shopping, you can bring them back to the store. Most stores now have a recycle box specifically for these bags. Keep just a few on hand in a bag keeper.
2. Find a spot to store bags that is easy to use. Under the sink, with your cleaning supplies, or where you keep your trash bags are a few ideas to consider.

Ninja tip: Have an extra 5 minutes? [Make your own bag keeper by converting a Clorox Wipes container](#). This super simple tip will keep a good supply of bags on hand for whenever you need them. Follow the video tutorial [HERE](#) to make your own!

Silverware Drawer: Always keep this drawer neat and tidy, and it will anchor you to a decluttered home!

1. Empty everything out onto a towel on your counter.
2. Clean out the drawer and the silverware tray.
3. Sort through your utensils removing any that are bent or rusted.

4. Put back all the items you are keeping.
5. Donate or toss the rest.

Ninja tip: Add items to your errands list now if you need to replace anything. Want to learn how to make an insanely effective shopping list? Click [HERE](#) to get my time-saving hacks!

❑ Refrigerator Front: No, you do not need to keep your refrigerator completely bare, but if you use this area as a bulletin board for your family schedule, we will need to organize things a bit.

1. Remove everything from the front and sort it as you go onto your kitchen counter.
2. Place items into the following piles:
 - Old papers – shred and toss
 - Artwork – keep for your children or toss
 - Current papers – deal with now or keep if you plan to put back on the fridge
 - Photos – sort and purge, only keeping current or favorites. Remove all the magnets and pare down to a few that are good and sturdy or are ones you just love. Toss or donate the rest.
3. Wipe down the front with a wet washcloth.
4. If you want to keep items on your fridge:
 - A nice calendar for the family’s activities is a great way to keep everyone’s schedules organized. If a paper coincides with a date on your calendar, then make a note on the calendar itself and keep the paper in a magnetic clip on your fridge front. Make sure to keep the most current on top as a reminder of an upcoming event.
 - Read [Setting Up A Calendar File](#) for even more tips!

❑ Dishtowels: Do you have more towels than room in your drawer? Let’s fix that right now!

1. Sort through your towels removing any that are frayed or too torn to use.
2. Give those towels a second life in your rag bag.
3. Clean out your drawer and return only the towels you want to keep.

❑ The Kitchen Sink: By having only a few items in or around your sink, you change the look of the entire room.

1. Remove all the items that you have in or around your kitchen sink.

2. Wipe your sink down and disinfect the drains by placing ½ cup of baking soda in your drain and pouring a cup of distilled white vinegar on top. Let sit for 5 minutes and flush with boiling water.
3. Toss or recycle any trash you find.
4. Keep the items in or around your sink to only those you need to wash or clean up.
5. The rest of the items should have a different or more convenient home.

□ **Potholders:** There is nothing worse than old, stained, or torn potholders. This is an easy area to purge since most potholders are inexpensive. If they are special to you, wash them routinely to keep them in good condition.

1. Empty your stash onto the kitchen counter.
2. Toss any that are beyond use or repair.
3. Add this item to your shopping list if you need to replenish a bit.
4. Do a quick wipe down of the drawer.
5. Return the potholders you would like to keep to the drawer.

10 Minutes:

□ **Temporary Clutter:** It amazes me how quickly things can accumulate in a room—things that do not belong, but ones you don't want to purge either. I call this dislocated clutter. It is temporary clutter that simply needs to be put away. To help prevent this from happening in the future, I have included an extra step with this task that you don't want to miss!

1. Use a clothes basket to make this task much easier.
2. Gather up all the items that do not belong and put them into the basket.
3. Take a stroll around your home and put any items from your basket back where they belong.
4. Set up a bin, basket, tote, or box in your room to toss these items into as you come across them. This will be known as your “Catch All Bin.” Each week, empty your catch all bin to keep it from overflowing.

□ **Coffee Mugs:** I LOVE coffee mugs and have a pretty hefty collection to prove it. Don't worry—I am not going to ask you to toss them all, but I do have a few tips that will allow you to keep more than you think!

1. Put all the mugs and cups you have onto your kitchen counter.
2. Throw away any that are cracked or chipped.

3. Remove any that you do not love or that you rarely use. These can be wrapped in newspaper and placed in a donation box.
4. Next choose your favorites—the mugs you just love. These will be your keepers.
5. I suggest keeping 2 mugs per family member in your kitchen at all times.
6. The rest on your counter can be packed away in a box. Use this box to recycle from every month, giving life to your beloved collection.
7. Any holiday mugs you want to keep should be put with the holiday decorations. Swap those mugs with your daily mugs for that holiday. When it's over, don't forget to swap back!

☐ Cookbooks: I love cookbooks and have quite a few. I keep my favorites in the kitchen with a few more on the bookshelf in my office. As long as you have the space to store your things, you can keep them even if it's not in the room for which they were intended.

1. Pull out all your cookbooks inspecting as you go. Sort into the following piles:
 - Ones you love and use frequently
 - Ones you love but want to keep for sentimental value – if you have quite a few in this pile, consider saving them for your children to have in their homes someday. A small tote stored in your attic or basement can hold a nice array of items that you can save for you kids when they have families of their own.
 - Ones you no longer love or use - pack in a box to donate. Put the box into your car right now so you can drop it off the next time you are out.
2. Quickly wipe down the books you are keeping and place them back into the spot you have designated.

20 Minutes:

☐ Medications and/or First Aid: If you keep your medicines in this room, take the time to sort through everything thoroughly. Most, if not all, medications have expiration dates that will make this task easy to do.

1. Gather up all your medications.
2. Sort into piles:
 - Keep
 - Expired

- No longer needed
3. Write a list of any medications or first aid items that need to be purchased or replaced and put with your shopping list.
 4. Dispose of expired medications in an appropriate and safe manner.
 5. Organize what you are keeping in a way that is easy to use.

□ **The Kitchen Freezer:** I suggest organizing your freezer monthly. This will keep any food from getting too old and becoming spoiled.

1. Empty everything out onto your kitchen counter.
2. Do a quick wipe down of the freezer, getting all the crumbs and spills. If you have an icemaker, take a few minutes to clean out the tray.
3. Remove or toss any items that are spoiled, outdated, or have freezer burn.
4. Make a list of meals you can make to use up items that are getting close to outdated.
5. Add any items needed to your shopping list as you go.
6. Place items back inside using baskets or boxes to corral like items such as snacks, vegetables, or fruit.

□ **Below the Kitchen Sink:** This can be a tricky area to organize because of all the pipes in the way. Let's see if we can work some magic there!

1. Remove everything, tossing trash or gathering recyclables as you go.
2. Once emptied, do a quick wipe down of the shelf and cabinet. If needed, put down contact paper and repair any leaks you find.
3. Decide what will be kept under your sink. Some ideas are:
 - A tote of cleaning supplies
 - Shopping bags, trash bags
 - Recyclables
 - Compost bucket
4. Gather up any containers that will contain items easily. Flexible totes work perfectly here, along with door organizers you can attach to the inside of the doors. Read: [Organizers for Your Home That Actually WORK!](#) to see the best tools to use in this area.
5. Put back all the items that are going to stay.
6. Put away anything else that no longer belongs there.

□ **Refrigerator:** This is another area that should be organized often. I like to do my refrigerator the night before I make our monthly grocery/errand run. This not only helps me to prepare for the fresh food, but also reminds me of anything that needs to be added to the shopping list.

Want to learn how to get all of your shopping done for one month in a single trip to the store? Click [HERE](#).

1. Empty out your fridge, placing items onto the kitchen counter.
2. Wipe down the inside and remove any drawers so you can clean inside and underneath.
3. Sort out any food that is spoiled or expired.
4. Wipe down items as you return them keeping groups together such as dressings or relishes.
5. Use baskets to corral kid's snacks or condiments more easily.
6. Keep each drawer separate and label to keep things organized.
7. Designate a shelf just for leftovers to cut down on spoiled or outdated food.

Cleaning supplies: I cannot tell you how much easier it is to clean my home when my cleaning supplies are orderly!

1. Empty all items out onto your counter.
2. Toss anything that is empty or dried up.
3. Update your shopping list adding anything you're out of as you go.
4. Use a bucket to corral sponges, brushes, or rags. Or you can use a bucket for each room. Label each with a permanent marker.
5. Bathrooms – Sponge, brush, toilet bowl cleaner, and counter cleaner.
6. Bedrooms – Rag, dusting polish.
7. Kitchen – Sponge, brush, dish soap, bleach spray.

Any Kitchen Cabinet or Kitchen Drawer: Use this list to conquer just about any kitchen cabinet in the room. By doing these one at a time WHEN you have time, you will complete your kitchen before you know it!

1. Take everything from inside your cabinet and put it onto your kitchen counter.
2. Sort as you go by removing anything that is broken, chipped, or things you no longer love or need.
3. Quickly wipe down the inside.
4. Put back only those items that you know you will use.
5. Put trash in a bag and take it out.
6. Put donations into a box, seal, and put into your car.

The Junk Drawer: We all have one of these and there is no reason not to! A junk drawer is meant to house miscellaneous items that simply do not have a home.

The trick here is to make sure those items make sense in the kitchen and the drawer is not being used just to hide things!

1. Take everything out of the drawer, sorting as you go.
2. Make a pile of items you want to keep in the drawer.
3. Make a pile of items that you want to keep but need put somewhere else.
4. The items that are left either get tossed or placed into a bag for donation.
5. Do a quick wipe down of the drawer.
6. Gather any baskets that will help set this drawer up better.
7. Put items in your newly set up drawer.
8. Put other items away now so you do not forget!
9. Toss trash and take donations out to your car.

□ Set Up A Command Center: A command center is just what it sounds like, a central area where the home and family are coordinated and ran from. More often than not, the best place to set up an area like this is in the kitchen. Since the entire family will be in this room several times a day, it ensures every family member will see the command center.

To find out how to set up the perfect command center, read [How To Set Up A Command Center in Your Home](#) for all the help you need to get started.

The Family Room

If you have kids, then this room can pretty much have all kinds of names—family room, living room, game room, play room, den, (eek) junk room. Whatever the goal of your room is, we are going to learn how to keep it clean and organized one minute at a time.

Feel free to call in the troops on this one. After all, the more they understand the WHY of your cleaning out and cleaning up, the more they will (hopefully!) continue on with your new tidy systems.

I have included many tasks for your family room below. There may be more here than you need. Simply pick and choose which apply to you and leave the rest for another room or skip altogether!

5 Minutes:

Trash: Always remove the trash to see just exactly what clutter you are dealing with. Easy to do and super effective too!

1. Take two bags with you for this task—one bag is for trash, the other is for recyclables.
2. Immediately take both bags out of your home when finished.

Dirty Clothes: If your family is anything like mine, then you just might have random items of clothing scattered about your home. Take a few minutes to gather those items up now and take them immediately to your laundry room.

Pillows and Blankets: How these things multiply in a home is amazing! Let's get a system set up so we can keep our pillows and blankets from overtaking our family room!

1. Gather up all the pillows and blankets in the room.
2. Sort through your piles removing anything that is too torn, stained, or frayed to keep.
3. Choose enough that make sense for the family you have.
4. Use a large basket, laundry basket, wooden chest, or simply a box for now to house them and make clean up simple and fun.
5. Ask your family to put blankets and pillows away before bed each night.

□ **Magazines:** In today's world of technology, there are still those of us that love a good physical read now and then. The problem is when we forget to remove the ones we have read (or ones we plan to read) and they end up in piles all over our home.

1. Gather up all your magazines from not only this room but the entire house.
2. Choose 3-5 to keep and toss the rest.
3. Yes, toss them. Or donate them. But get rid of them.
4. Don't worry more will be coming in the mail soon.
5. Put the magazines you are keeping in a designated place in your family room, on your nightstand next to your bed, or in a reading bag that you can carry from room to room when you want something to read.

10 Minutes:

□ **Temporary Clutter:** It amazes me how quickly things can accumulate in a room—things that do not belong, but ones you don't want to purge either. I call this dislocated clutter. It is temporary clutter that simply needs to be put away. To help prevent this from happening in the future, I have included an extra step with this task that you don't want to miss!

1. Use a clothes basket to make this task much easier.
2. Gather up all the items that do not belong and put them into the basket.
3. Take a stroll around your home and put any items from your basket back where they belong.
4. Set up a bin, basket, tote, or box in your room to toss these items into as you come across them. This will be known as your "Catch All Bin." Each week, empty your catch all bin to keep it from overflowing.

□ **Couch cushions:** It just amazes me how things can gather and multiply under those cushions. For that reason, I would put this decluttering chore on your monthly calendar.

1. Remove all the cushions and set off to the side.
2. Gather up any items that you discover. Toss the trash/food, put away anything you are keeping.
3. Vacuum everything making sure to use the hose for the corners.
4. Vacuum the cushions and return them to the couch.

20 Minutes:

□ Movies: There are several ways to sort and organize movies. I will cover them here. Please choose the one that makes sense for the amount of movies you have and the size of your family.

1. Gather up all your movies. Make sure you grab any from other rooms in your home.
2. Check to make sure the correct movie is in the correct case.
3. Remove any movies you no longer love and would like to donate as you go.
4. Remove any cases that are missing movies to deal with later.
5. Toss any chipped or scratched movies that you know cannot be repaired.
6. Sort movies in one of three ways.
 - Genre – Comedy/Action/Fantasy/Adult/Children/Horror/Sci-Fi
 - Alphabetical – Best in a family with older children
 - Favorites – This works best with a small collection
7. How to store your movies—again this will depend on the size of your collection and the room you have.
 - Buy a system – If you have a small selection, you can purchase any number of cases to easily store your movies.
 - Use what you have – If you have a coffee table with room below, you can keep your movies there. An old bookcase is what I use, and it works great. A wooden chest will also hold a large amount, but you will want to use dividers to keep things sorted better.
 - Ditch the case – You can also remove the cases and keep your movies in a binder or other case. (Store the cases in an attic or basement in case you ever want to donate or sell them.) This works great for large collections and takes up little to no space. Cases like this can be a bit expensive, so do your homework before committing!

Ninja tip: Do you lend movies out to family or friends? Make sure you get them back with this super simple tip! Stick a return address label inside the case or on the back with your name and address. This way, the person that borrowed it will know whom it belongs to when they are done!

□ Toys: If you have young ones at home, I am sure you have toys not only in your family room but also in just about every room of your home. Come up with a way to contain a few select toys so you are not constantly battling with them.

1. Gather up all the toys in the room you are decluttering.
2. Purge any broken toys or donate any toys that your kids have outgrown.

3. Make a pile of toys that need to be taken to a different room. For example, a game piece or a Lego that belongs to a set.
4. Find a container that will work in the room you are in. A large basket for the family room, a small basket for your office, a toy box for the bedroom.
5. Have a quick family meeting explaining the purpose of the container. Show them their job and how to put all toys inside before they leave the room for the day. A pre-bedtime chore is a great way to teach kids how to tidy up their things.

□ **Games:** There is nothing quite as fun as game night—a great way for a family to play together no matter what the ages are!

1. Gather up all the games and puzzles.
2. Sort through family favorites ensuring all the pieces are accounted for.
3. Toss any broken games or games missing too many pieces.
4. Donate any games your family has outgrown or pack away for your kids if it is a classic or has sentimental value.
5. If your family frequently plays games, you may want to set up an area that you can keep ready at all times. A table with chairs or extra-large pillows around a large coffee table.
6. Use various sized totes to organize games. Keep family favorites out and store the rest in a closet or attic.
7. Have a basket to hold timers, pads of paper, and pencils for keeping score.

The Office

Not all homes have an office, but all homes have a bill paying system. Pick and choose the tasks that you can use to organize your bills and budget a bit better. Our goal is a balanced budget and no more late fees! The best way to ensure that is to have a system in place (office or not) that will keep things tidy and organized. Although we will cover decluttering tasks in this area, we will also focus heavily on setting up systems to keep paper under control. With systems in place, you will no longer get buried in paper. Each paper will have a destination that will be simple and direct. Your goal is to follow each system until it becomes second nature.

The biggest hurdle when we declutter is seeing things differently. We are not only removing the mess but also training ourselves to see our things as tools to live a better life.

5 Minutes:

Errand Basket: How many times have you walked out of your door for a day full of errands only to find you left your list at home? More times than you care to count, I bet! Don't worry, I used to be the same way until I found one simple hack that changed everything—an errand basket.

1. Choose a spot that will make sense and serve as a reminder to check there before leaving for errands. If you do not have a spot in sight, you can leave a post-it note by the door or set your phone alarm as a reminder to check there before heading out.
2. I suggest two baskets here, one large and one small.
3. The smaller basket will hold your errand book, pens, scissors, coupons, list tablet (used for future purchases you need to make).
4. The larger basket will hold any returns that need to be taken back to the store. Don't forget to attach your receipt to each item so you have it ready to go.
5. As you run out of things, make a note on your list or pop a post-it note in your basket.
6. As coupons and sales flyers come into your home put them into your errand basket.
7. Refer to both baskets when writing up your errands list.

□ **Knickknacks:** For some reason collections and doodads tend to end up in the office. If you are like me, you have quite a few pictures around your home, and the office is no exception. It is a pretty fine line between just enough and too many, and this is where a few choices need to be made. For me, I will limit the number of knickknacks, so I can free up room for more photos.

1. Gather up all the knickknacks in the room, sorting as you go.
 - Keep only what the room will reasonably hold
 - Donate what you no longer love
 - Toss any chipped or broken items
 - Give away items you love but simply do not have room for to family. If you have young children, consider creating a box for each so they can have memories of their own that were once yours.
2. Once you have your keep pile decided on, put those items back in a way that is open and clean. Clutter collections are hard to see and admire. A few beloved items out at a time is better than a large cluttered mass of many. Keep the extras in a box and swap out every few months.

□ **Receipts:** This is the system we use in our family, and it works like a charm. Now you will be able to easily find any receipts you need when you need them.

1. Gather up any receipts you have and put them all in one box. I would not sort these at this point. Simply keep them gathered and start fresh from here.
2. Find a basket that you can keep out to hold all current receipts for the month.
3. To sort future receipts, a small accordion file works great here. You will want the size of a legal envelope 9 ½” x 4 ½” that has at least 12 dividers. Label each divider for each month of the year.
4. At the end of the month sort your receipts that are in your basket. Purge any you no longer need.
5. Put the ones you are keeping in the accordion file for the month they were received.
6. At the end of the year, gather up all your receipts in 1 bundle and save for tax time.

□ **Calendar File:** This is my secret tool to always being on time and organized for monthly events—a super simple tip that anyone can use.

1. Gather any items that are calendar related.
 - Invitations
 - Doctor appointments
 - Paperwork needed for a future appointment
 - Reminder cards

- Gift ideas for future birthdays or holidays
 - Picnic flyer or other events
2. Create a file in your drawer that will hold all of these items.
 3. Label it clear and bright so it stands out.
 4. When you note something on your calendar that has something in the file place an asterisk (*) next to it to remind you to check there.
 5. At the beginning of each month, remove this file and go through all the items inside.
 - Purge any old items
 - Note anything you have a reminder for in the current month
 - Place an * next to items on your calendar that have papers in the file.
 6. Read: [How To Set Up A Calendar File](#) for more tips on how to use this super effective system.

10 Minutes:

Trash: The office might just be the dumping ground for most of your paper trash and recyclables. Because of this, this task that usually takes 5 minutes might just take 10. For this task, use boxes so you can set them up and move quickly around the area.

1. Take three boxes to sort the papers and trash.
2. One box is for trash, one for things to shred, and the third is for recyclables.
3. Immediately label and take all boxes out of your home when finished.

Weekend Basket: As you are going about decluttering this room, you will come across items that you want to look at but are not urgent. This is where the weekend basket comes into play.

A weekend basket is simply a bin or basket that holds any items you want to go through or read over. These items are important, meaning they need attention within the next few weeks, but not urgent, meaning they don't need attention within the next few days.

Each weekend when you have a bit of leisure time, take your weekend basket, a pen, pad of paper, and post-it notepad.

1. Go through each paper.
2. If it's trash, put it in a pile to toss or shred.

3. If it calls for further action, make a note on a post-it of what you need to do and stick it on top.
4. If it is a bill, you will want to immediately place it into your bill paying area so it does not get overlooked.
5. If it belongs to another person, again use a post-it and write their name along with the action needed on top. Put these papers into your command center or other family hub area.
6. Set up time each week to go through this basket and never EVER let important papers fall through the cracks again.

□ **Temporary Clutter:** It amazes me how quickly things can accumulate in a room—things that do not belong, but ones you don't want to purge either. I call this dislocated clutter. It is temporary clutter that simply needs to be put away. To help prevent this from happening in the future, I have included an extra step with this task that you don't want to miss!

1. Use a clothes basket to make this task much easier.
2. Gather up all the items that do not belong and put them into the basket.
3. Take a stroll around your home and put any items from your basket back where they belong.
4. Set up a bin, basket, tote, or box in your room to toss these items into as you come across them. This will be known as your "Catch All Bin." Each week, empty your catch all bin to keep it from overflowing.
5. Take it one step further and set up a basket or bin for each member of your family. This will keep the papers even more organized! As an item comes into the home for a specific family member, put it immediately into their bin. Train your family to check bins daily or every few days so no papers are overlooked.

□ **Desktop:** Having a cleaned off desk does something to the head. A cluttered desk can be stressful, so finding a place inside of your desk to house your things is a game changer. Sure, you can keep current items on the top if that helps. A calendar, file holder, or a notepad is fine, but I encourage you to limit what you keep on top of your desk.

1. Clean everything off your desk, sorting as you go.
 - Shred
 - File
 - Papers that need sorted (keep in a large basket until your new systems are all in place)

- Put any urgent items you find in a pile that you can put into your bill paying area once one is set up.
 - Toss any items that are broken or used up.
 - Put any items that need to be taken to another room to put away when you are done here.
2. Wipe off your desk and polish. Take the time to do the front sides and back as well.
 3. Decide what will stay on top of your desk. Remember to only keep essentials that pertain to you, you do not need every single item on this list on your desk. Some ideas are:
 - Tissues
 - File holder
 - Pen holder/organizer
 - Calendar
 - Phone stand (used to hold your phone up vertically)
 - Charging station
 - Computer
 - Lamp
 - Calculator
 - Coffee warmer
 - Cup coaster
 - Stapler/electric pencil sharpener
 - Printer or other items that have no other place to be
 4. Set your desk up so you have an open area to work without having to move anything. This is why it is important to have an uncluttered, always ready to go, work area. Wasting time tidying up will derail any office project quickly.
 5. If you have more things than you do room, you may want to find another area to store items.

□ Top Desk Drawer: The hub of the office—the supply cabinet for running everything smoothly in this room. The top drawer is set up to hold many *different* things, NOT many things. That is why it is shallow and large.

Keep just enough to run your office efficiently and the rest of your supplies can be kept in a box, in a bottom desk drawer, or in a file cabinet.

1. Take everything out.
2. Do a quick wipe down.
3. Decide what you need to run your office. Some items to consider are:
 - Pens/pencils/highlighters/markers

- Scissors
 - Paper clips of various sizes
 - Erasers
 - Staples/staple remover
 - Tabs for files/papers for the tabs
 - Glue/whiteout
 - Post-it notes of various sizes
 - Ruler
 - Rubber bands
4. Gather organizers to corral small items. Box lids work perfectly here, or you can purchase an inexpensive drawer organizer meant specifically for this drawer.
 5. Set things up with the most commonly used items in the front and the less commonly used in the back.

□ **Extra Cords and Cables:** I am sure you have random cords, ear buds, chargers, and cables scattered throughout your home. We find keeping these items in our office is a great place. You might also consider keeping them in your kitchen or workshop if that makes better sense for your family.

1. Gather up all items listed above.
2. Purge as you go, removing any items you no longer need or have no idea what they even are anymore!
3. Bundle up with a rubber band and label if necessary. Masking tape tends to work best here.
4. House all your items in a basket, box, or clear plastic fishing lure box. (Works great for this!)
5. Label the outside for ease of use.
6. Place on a shelf so the family will use this new system easily.

□ **Outgoing Mail System:** There is nothing I love more than getting honest-to-goodness mail. Cards, letters, and invitations all are a joy to receive. Having a mail system in place will not only make correspondence easier but will also encourage you to do more of it, brightening someone else's day.

1. Gather up all your mail supplies—stamps, return address labels, envelopes, greeting cards, and envelope stickers.
2. Sort and purge, keeping only what is usable and/or needed.
3. If you have quite a bit of supplies, particularly numerous like items, set up a basket to hold the like items. Our shelf holds 3 small baskets, and this works great to better sort things.

- 1 basket for stamps and return labels
 - 1 basket for envelopes of various sizes
 - 1 basket for cards and stickers
4. Label things for ease of use by anyone in the family.
 5. Order stamps so you always have a supply. I love fun stamps for holidays and other events. Having a supply is nice and will brighten up any card. You can order stamps online at www.usps.com. Naturally they have a huge selection, but be aware there is a small shipping fee.

20 Minutes:

Incoming Mail system: The key to controlling paper clutter is having a system in place for the papers that come into our homes every day. A mail system is the secret sauce to a clutter free office!

1. Decide where to sort mail. This all depends on where you pay your bills. If you have an office, sort your mail there. If you pay bills in the kitchen, you will want to sort there.
2. Have a basket for important papers that need attention within the week. A drawer might make more sense here. It all depends on how you are doing things now. The point is to have a place to put all important papers knowing they will get the attention they need within the week. When it comes to paper clutter, batch work is the best way to approach it or you will spend too much time every day dealing with papers.
3. Put any magazines or reading materials where you usually read them. The family room, night stand, or a reading bag are all good options.
4. Shred/toss the junk and trash.
5. Set up an errand basket for any sales flyers or coupons. The next time you prepare for a shopping trip, all the items you need will be right where you need them. Never miss a sale again!
6. Deal with invitations or personal correspondence.
7. Set up a weekend basket for everything else. A weekend basket is a large basket that gets tackled during your down time. Catalogs, junk mail you actually do want to look over, special offers, etc. Again, by batching your work, you will save so much more time and relax knowing that things will no longer fall through the cracks.
8. Make sure to schedule time to tackle the weekly important papers so nothing is overlooked.

□ **Files:** A good file system is another crucial tool in an organized office. Setting up files does not have to be complicated. Create only the files your family needs and nothing more. Combine smaller related files to keep things tidy. Above all, you will want to adopt a system that makes sense. A few ideas are:

1. Files by month – house all bills, receipts, other items by the month. Purge annually keeping the required documents by law.
2. Files by item – utilities, credit cards, accounts, medical, auto, investments, insurance, pets, etc. Purge annually keeping the required documents by law.
3. File by person – (convenient if you have older children) student loans, medical bills, receipts, etc.
4. A combination of all three – more often than not and depending on your situation, you might just have a little of all three. Remember these are just suggestions, so pick and choose what works best for you. If it doesn't work for you, you will not use it.

Not all things need to be in actual files to work in a system. Some tips here are:

1. A basket for current receipts
2. A drawer for current bills that need paid along with your budget
3. A drawer for investment papers and portfolios to research and read
4. A legacy drawer specifically for any documents needed if you are older—locked if necessary

□ **Warranties/Owner's Manuals:** These are important items but can quickly overtake an office if a system is not in place.

1. Gather all the warranties/manuals you have and toss any you no longer need.
2. Sort what you have into sections.
 - a. Kitchen
 - b. Basement
 - c. Outside
 - d. Rest of the house
 - e. Kids items
3. Set up binders using large Velcro 3 ringed pockets to hold each section. The amount you have will determine how many binders you need. I find one large binder will hold 2 sections listed above.
4. Label each binder for ease of use.
5. Keep your binders on a shelf or in an unused drawer.
6. Purge annually any items you no longer own.

□ **Bill Paying System:** By having a system in place for paying your bills and balancing your budget, you will no longer worry about late fees or lost promotions. I like to keep simple systems for money set in place that work. Complicated is not the best rule of thumb when dealing with your money.

1. Decide on a location for all of your bills. A desk drawer, a basket, a portable plastic tote, a kitchen drawer or cabinet are all options depending on your home set up.
2. Keep a journal, pen, calculator, etc. in this area if it is not in your desk.
3. Decide on the day of the week you will pay your bills and balance your budget. I like to pay bills weekly to keep current on all things. You may decide to pay bi-weekly or even monthly if your bills are small and few.
4. Put a reminder on your phone and/or write it on your calendar. You will want to use this reminder until your new habit is instilled.

Create your bill paying system:

1. Open all current mail for the week/bi-week/month and sort and file
 - Junk
 - Needs paid
 - Needs correspondence (dealt with)
 - Needs filed
 - Needs passed on to someone else (spouse/older child)
2. Balance all checking/savings accounts
3. Balance the household budget to date
4. Pay any bills for the week/month
5. Note all on your budget
6. Place outgoing mail by the door to be sent
7. Close up budget for the week/bi-week/month

The Bathroom

This room is one that should be decluttered on a regular basis. Whether you tackle it monthly or quarterly, I encourage you to get it onto your list so it does not get out of control.

More often than not, a bathroom is shared by more than one person, so having things organized will keep this room from being in a constant state of chaos. Focus on setting up an area that will help you prepare for your day efficiently and end your day the same way. Spending wasted seconds or even minutes trying to find the tools you need is not only time wasting but frustrating as well.

5 Minutes:

Trash: Always remove the trash to see just exactly what clutter you are dealing with. Easy to do and super effective too!

1. Take two bags with you for this task—one bag is for trash, the other is for recyclables.
2. Immediately take both bags out of your home when finished.

Dirty Clothes: If your family is anything like mine, then you just might have random items of clothing scattered about your home. Take a few minutes to gather those items up now and take them immediately to your laundry room.

Towels and Washcloths: We deserve a little luxury, and a frayed or torn towel can take a luxury experience and stop it in its tracks. You do not need a hundred towels in a bathroom but rather a few good quality choices that you comfortably have space for. I think 1-2 towels per person using the room is a realistic amount. Remember you do not need to wash a towel every time you use it. Hang dry and use several times before washing to lengthen the life and quality of the towel.

1. Sort through all your towels and washcloths.
2. Remove any that are frayed or torn beyond repair. Use those for rags or for your pets.
3. Make a list of any items you need to replace.
4. Wipe down the area where you store your towels and washcloths.
5. Put things back in a neat and orderly way.
6. Consider a hook or towel bar to hold a wet towel. Once dry, use again to extend the life of the towel.

□ **Personal Care and Grooming:** Having a dedicated spot for hygiene items and lotions can keep a bathroom looking neat and tidy.

1. Gather up all your items in this area and remove any that are used up, dried out, or older than dirt.
2. Put any duplicates in another area until you need them. Places such as:
 - A linen closet
 - Below the sink
 - In your own closet in a bin
3. Find a central location if possible for everything you use in this area. Try:
 - A basket
 - A drawer
 - A bin
4. Wipe it down and return all the items you have chosen to keep.

□ **Teeth care:** This is another area that takes just minutes to clean and purge, and therefore should be on our lists at least monthly.

1. Check toothbrushes and replace if needed. It is recommended we replace every 1-3 months or once they show wear.
2. Clean toothbrushes after an illness following these tips on [Web Md.](#)
3. Clean the toothbrush holder.
4. Return everything once dry.

□ **Magazines:** For some reason the toilet tends to be a first choice for reading material. For that reason, we have added magazines to our bathroom decluttering list.

1. Gather up all the reading materials and sort through them.
2. Toss any that are old and outdated or completely covered in dust.
3. Clean the container you use to hold these items.
4. Don't forget to get the floor and corners.
5. Return the reading materials you are going to keep.

10 Minutes:

□ **Temporary Clutter:** It amazes me how quickly things can accumulate in a room—things that do not belong, but ones you don't want to purge either. I call this dislocated clutter. It is temporary clutter that simply needs to be put away.

To help prevent this from happening in the future, I have included an extra step with this task that you don't want to miss!

1. Use a clothes basket to make this task much easier.
2. Gather up all the items that do not belong and put them into the basket.
3. Take a stroll around your home and put any items from your basket back where they belong.

□ Linens: Some of us keep our linens in our bathroom, and others keep them in a linen closet. No matter where you store them, use this section to tackle the linens for your home.

1. Remove each piece, making piles as you go. Separate:
 - Sets in each size
 - Anything you no longer need or is stretched or torn beyond use.
 - Toss or recycle anything you can give a second life. A drop sheet for painting or moving is a great way to use things again.
2. Wipe down the area you use to hold your linens.
3. Set things up in an organized way. You can sort by:
 - Set – Fitted sheet, top sheet, and pillowcases.
 - By item – All fitted sheets, all top sheets, and all pillowcases.

□ Tub and/or Shower: Yes, even these areas can become cluttered and need to be cleaned out every month or so.

1. Take everything out and do a good cleaning.
2. Remove/toss any items that are empty.
3. Make a list as you go of things that need to be replaced.
4. If you are short on space, consider getting an organizer that hangs over the showerhead for more options.
5. Keep knickknacks away from your tub unless you have the room for them. Knickknacks mean clutter in most cases so be choosy when you decide to include any.
6. A few towels, a basket of washcloths, and a candle are all that you need next to your tub.

□ Children's Bath Toys: Another area that needs to be sorted and cleaned often. Wet toys breed bacteria, so a quick spin through your dishwasher is usually enough to clean things up.

1. Gather up all the bath toys that have accumulated.
2. Toss any broken or mildew laden toys.
3. Wash any that will allow it in your dishwasher to sterilize.

4. Wipe down the area that you use to hold the toys.
5. If what you have set up is no longer working, consider trying something else. A few options:
 - A toy bag that hangs in the tub
 - A plastic basket that allows for good air flow so the toys can dry

20 Minutes:

☐ Makeup: Little did I know at one time that makeup had an expiration date. Those dates are there to make sure we are using a clean and healthy product. For this reason, sorting and purging items every 6 months is encouraged.

1. Remove your makeup one item at a time.
2. Check the dates and toss any that are expired.
3. Toss any that are used up, dried out, or that you no longer love.
4. Make a list of any items you need to replace the next time you are out running errands.
5. Gather up all of your brushes and take the time to clean them. Watch this [YouTube video](#) for tips on how to clean your brushes and sponges easily.
6. Wipe down the storage space you use to hold your makeup.
7. If you know this setup is not working, take the time now to make any adjustments that work for the space and the items you are keeping.
8. Put back all the makeup you are keeping and the tools you just cleaned.

☐ Medications: If you keep your medicines in this room, take the time to sort through everything thoroughly. Most, if not all, medications have expiration dates that will make this task easy to do.

1. Gather up all your medications
2. Sort into piles:
 - Keep
 - Expired
 - No longer needed
3. Write a list of any medications that need to be replaced and put with your shopping list.
4. Dispose of expired medications in an appropriate and safe manner.
5. Organize what you are keeping in a way that is easy to use.

The Kid's Room & Closet

If your kids are older, you might just want to skip this section all together. I have found that letting them be in charge of their own rooms is the best way to build trust with your teen. For our family, this was a much more important lesson to learn than how to keep a room tidy and decluttered. Our rule was the door must stay closed at all times. If I didn't have to see it, then I did not have to stress out about it. We did encourage a good closet declutter every few months.—you will find that tip below.

Younger children will learn so much working side by side with you—lessons that they will take into their teen years, so hopefully they will want to declutter on their own. Toddlers and babies can still be in the room and shown how to keep things sorted even though they might hinder you more than they help.

5 Minutes:

Trash: Always remove the trash to see just exactly what clutter you are dealing with. Easy to do and super effective too!

1. Take two bags with you for this task—one bag is for trash, the other is for recyclables.
2. Immediately take both bags out of your home when finished.

Make It Easy: If you want your children to keep things neat, you will want to get a few systems set into place that will encourage just that. A few ideas are:

1. A large basket for pillows, blankets, and stuffed animals
2. A laundry basket
3. A tote for toys
4. Shelves for games and books
5. High shelves for delicate toys and games that require adult assistance

Dirty Clothes: I like to make things easy on kids, so a dirty clothes basket or bin in their room will encourage them to use it. As a safeguard, you might want to mention that only the clothes in the laundry bin will get washed. This usually gets those dirty clothes off of the floor.

1. Gather up any dirty clothes and take to the laundry room.
2. Set up a basket for future dirty clothing.

3. If you prefer to keep a basket in the bathroom instead, make sure your kids know the rule suggested above.

□ Temporary Clutter: It amazes me how quickly things can accumulate in a room—things that do not belong, but ones you don't want to purge either. I call this dislocated clutter. It is temporary clutter that simply needs to be put away. To help prevent this from happening in the future, I have included an extra step with this task that you don't want to miss!

1. Use a clothes basket to make this task much easier.
2. Gather up all the items that do not belong and put them into the basket.
3. Take a stroll around your home and put any items from your basket back where they belong.

□ Dresser top: I really love the look of a cleaned off dresser, and this holds true in a child's room too. Use this area for the next day's outfit, to hold a book bag, or a place for other items that need attention. A dry erase board for older kids with reminders can be helpful too.

1. Remove everything from the dresser top, sorting as you go.
2. Do a quick wipe down.
3. Decide what will stay on the dresser.
4. Label if needed.

10 Minutes:

□ Clean Up The Floor: When it comes to the kids' rooms, sometimes there are more things on the floor than anywhere else. Having totes or bins specifically for these toys will help you from breaking a leg on a deadly Lego in the middle of the night. Set up a rule that the floor must be cleaned before story time.

1. Gather up all the toys from the floor.
2. Sort as you go, tossing items into bins where they belong.
3. Remove any broken toys as you come across them.

□ Under The Bed: Oh boy, can this be a scary place! I am not sure how so many random things get lost under a bed, but to combat this, I encourage you to use under the bed totes. It's a great place to store out of season items or even rotational toys if your kids are younger.

1. If you have room, I suggest you move the bed. If not, pull out everything that is beneath it.

2. Do a quick vacuum and clean up.
3. Toss anything that is trash, food, or broken.
4. Gather up anything that belongs in another room.
5. Donate what is no longer needed.
6. Decide what will be kept under the bed.

20 Minutes:

□ Rotate Toys: If your kids have a pretty large supply of toys, you might want to consider using a rotation system. Kids get bored quickly even if they have a large supply of toys to play with. By removing the extra and setting up a system, you will save not only your sanity but money too!

1. Determine how much room you have. A top shelf in a closet works best for this system. If you are short on room, you might want to keep these items in an attic or basement.
2. Find 3 totes or bags of similar size.
3. Fill each with toys from your child's room.
4. Pack the totes or bags away.
5. At the end of 3 months, grab a tote and empty it out.
6. Refill it with toys that have been out for the last 3 months.
7. Your kids will love to dig into the fresh toys!
8. If you have the room, you can use more totes or bags and do this more frequently.

□ The Closet: Setting up the closet so your kids can take responsibility for its neatness is a great way to teach them to organize young. Make it easy by setting up their closet in zones.

1. Top shelf – Mom and Dad's zone to be used for storage or rotational toys.
2. Middle area – Parents and kids zone and used for clothing and shoes. I suggest a hanging organizer labeled with the days of the week. Each Sunday you can fill with outfits for the up and coming week, so your kids can take responsibility for dressing themselves.
3. The floor – Kids only zone. Fill with bins and totes that do not have lids. Use this area specifically for toys. By keeping things simple, (using totes without lids) you will in turn keep cleaning up simple as well.

□ **Dressers:** I would encourage you to keep this area specifically for clothes if your closet is on the small side. Label each drawer as to what is inside with a picture or words if your children are older.

1. Tackle one drawer at a time.
2. Go through each drawer, sorting clothes as you go.
3. Remove anything that is too stained or too small. Donate or toss those items.
4. Make piles of items you are keeping.
5. When the entire dresser is emptied out, decide what clothes will go where.
6. Label in an age appropriate way.
7. Put the clothes back.

□ **Set Up Zones:** With kids especially, I find that setting up a room up in zones is much easier for them to keep things neat. The older your children are, the more zones they might have. Zones are basically areas where certain tasks are done. A few ideas are:

1. Reading zone – keep books, a reading chair, and lamp
2. Drawing zone – a small table and art supplies
3. Sleeping zone – a bed and nightstand
4. Dressing zone – dresser, hamper, and other items needed
5. Playing zone – toys and bins for easy clean up

The Closet

I consider the closet one of the trickiest areas in the home to declutter. Emotional attachment tends to be high when it comes to our clothes. Wedding dresses, sport uniforms, concert shirts, baby clothes, clothes we hope to fit into again, and so on. It is only natural that we would want to hold on to these things.

Learning what is truly important and what we need to say goodbye to, is a fine line to toe. For this reason, several tasks will have more than one check box. This is so you can visit it more than once—and just as often as you need to.

Your first time through will not completely remove all that should go, so giving yourself time to adjust to decluttering will help you gradually see these things differently.

Please note that even though these tips are written for your closet, they can all be used in any other family members' closets as well. Print out a few extra pages and pass them along to your children. If your children are younger, then you might want to do it with them. I cannot stress enough how children love to take charge of their own things no matter what their age is. It is our responsibility as clutter bugs to not pass on that bad habit to our kids. Teach by example so they learn to live with less.

5 Minutes:

Remove the Dirty: If you do not have a system in place for dirty laundry, take the time to make one now. This will make this chore second nature for anyone in your home.

1. Gather up all the dirty clothing and take it to your laundry room.
2. Find a basket that you can use for dirty clothes. A small one in your bathroom or one in any closet will work fine. If you have more room, then you will want a larger basket.
3. Go just a bit further and put a basket into your children's rooms as well.
4. Tell everyone that only the clothes in the dirty laundry basket will get washed. Any items on the floor will stay where they are until the owners pick them up. This usually gets the family on board and fast.
5. Schedule laundry daily or weekly. The frequency will depend on the size of your family.

6. Put clean clothes into color coordinated baskets for each family member. Make sure they are aware of their “new” responsibility. Even toddlers can learn to take care of their laundry. It’s a great and fun way to teach them responsibility.

□ **Remove the Trash:** Normally we are looking for garbage, but this time we are looking for soiled clothing or anything torn beyond repair.

1. Do a very quick look-through of the clothes. If you come across things that are torn or stained beyond repair, remove them.
2. Use discarded items as rags or toss them.
3. If you are unsure of an item, set it off to the side in what I like to call a “maybe” box. Set a date on your phone for 2-4 weeks from today. If those items have not been asked for, then you can (usually) safely remove them.

□ **Accessories:** This includes belts, ties, or scarves.

1. Gather up all your accessories.
2. Go through each item, sorting into the following piles as you go:
 - Love it!
 - Like it
 - Hate it – donate
 - Ripped, torn, or stained – toss
3. Set up a way to house the items you are keeping:
 - A tie hanger to hold ties
 - A basket for your scarves
 - A bin for your belts

10 Minutes:

□ **Unmentionables:** Why oh why do we do it? Keep those embarrassingly worn panties or even that stretched out pair? I like to remember a quote my grandmother used to say, “always make sure you have nice underwear on just in case you are in an accident.”

Eeek! A bit morbid—yes, but that silly quote has kept my panty drawer purged of any pairs I would be embarrassed to be caught in.

1. Gather up all your unmentionables.
2. Toss the massive pile onto your bed.
3. Go through each piece being ruthless.

4. If they are stained, torn, stretched, or way too small, get rid of them now.
5. Make a note on your errand list of anything you need to replace.

☐ **Socks:** Just like our panties this is an area that we tend to ignore and rarely declutter.

1. Gather up all your socks.
2. Go through them on your bed pairing up as you go.
3. Toss any that are torn or stretched out.
4. Single socks can be put into a basket and given a “last chance.”
5. This should give you time to find the mate if you do have it.
6. After a week or two, revisit this basket and toss any that are mate-less.
7. Make a note on your errand list of anything you need to replace.

☐ **Jewelry:** This is an area that is rarely decluttered but can become a mess so quickly if we do not keep an eye on things.

1. Remove all your jewelry one piece at a time into three piles as you go.
 - Love it
 - Like it
 - Can part with
2. Remove any pieces that are worn or broken beyond repair. (If they are gold take them to be valued and turned in for cash!)
3. Clean your jewelry box/bin/basket, removing any dust.
4. Set up things so they are neat, easy to use, and organized.
5. Put the pieces you love back.
6. If you have room, you may also put back the pieces you like.
7. Sort the pieces you can part with:
 - Worth money – take to a pawnshop or jeweler
 - Large fun pieces for your kids to use for dress up
 - Pieces you can donate
8. If you have expensive pieces, choose specific storage containers that will keep them safe from dust and corrosion.

☐ **Outerwear:** If you live in an area that has all 4 seasons, you will want to do this at the beginning of each season to keep things purged.

1. Gather up all your coats.
2. Go through each piece and sort:
 - Love it!
 - Like it
 - Torn or stained – toss it

- No longer love it – donate
3. If you are keeping it and it is in the current season, return it to the closet.
 4. If it belongs in another season, set it off to the side.
 5. Create a pile for each season.
 6. Store off-season items in a tote and label for easy access.
 7. Do this step at the beginning of each season.

20 Minutes:

□□□ **Hanger Trick:** This is by far my favorite way to clean out a closet. It is painless, simple, and makes all the decisions for us as to what is going to stay and what needs to go.

1. Turn all the hangers in your closet the opposite way. So, they will hook on the bar from BEHIND.
2. As you wear an outfit and are putting it back in, turn the hanger around so it is hooking onto the bar in the correct direction.
3. After 1-3 months, take note of which hangers are still backwards. These are the clothes that you no longer wear. Sort through them quickly and remove any items that you no longer love.

□□□ **Shoes:** Shoes can quickly take over our closets and require a good sort several times throughout the year. Do this seasonally when you do your clothing to stay on top of things.

1. Gather up all the shoes and sort as you go:
 - Love them!
 - Like them
 - Hate them - donate
 - Beyond repair – toss
2. Set up a way to store shoes so they keep their form and remain scuff free. A nice wooden shelf, door bag, or labeled shoeboxes with photos of the shoes on the outside for easy identification are all great options.

□ **Seasonal Clothing:** If you have room for all 4 seasons in your closet, then good for you! If not, follow these steps.

1. Gather up any clothing that is not in season.
2. Put everything on the bed for easy sorting.
3. Go through items one at a time. If it is:
 - Torn or soiled beyond repair – use for rags or toss.

- No longer loved or worn – donate.
 - No longer fits and never will– donate.
4. Find an under-the-bed storage tote and label with the season you have stored inside.
 5. Make a note on your errands list of any items you will need to fill or replace.
 6. By doing just this task every new season, you will keep your closet decluttered at all times.

□□□ If It Doesn't Fit: We all have them. Those clothes that are a bit too small, but we believe we will fit into again someday. There is nothing wrong with keeping a few absolute favorites, but when the smaller clothes amount to more room than we have to spare, it is time to make some decisions.

The only case where you will want to keep the smaller clothes is if you are expecting. In that case, you will want to pack your pre-pregnancy clothes away until you can wear them again.

1. Gather up any clothing that no longer fits.
2. Go through each item and check the size:
 - If it is too small to ever happen again, let it go.
 - If it is slightly tight and uncomfortable, put into a “MAYBE” 3-month box and set a reminder on your phone.
3. After three months, check in on your box and see if those clothes fit once again. If they do...celebrate! If they don't...
4. Either re-date the box for one more chance and try that diet again or let them go completely.
5. Don't forget to set the new reminder date on your phone.

The Entry Way or Mud Room

No matter into what room you enter or leave your home from, I believe this area sets the tone for the day. If you leave from an organized space, then your day will begin with a bit of sense and order. If you arrive back home in an organized space, then you enter your home the same way.

A chaotic mudroom, more often than not, means a chaotic home. By just setting up a few systems and removing the excess, we will get you on the way to a streamlined entryway for you and your family—one that will spill over to the rest of the home.

5 Minutes:

Trash: Always remove the trash to see just exactly what clutter you are dealing with. Easy to do and super effective too!

1. Take two bags with you for this task—one bag is for trash, the other is for recyclables.
2. Immediately take both bags out of your home when finished.

Set Up a Drop and Depart Area: This simply is a place to drop your purse, keys, sunglasses, and other items. By having a system in place, you will ensure you never lose your keys again.

1. Choose a spot that is easy to use and right inside the door.
2. A hook or a dish work great to hold your keys.
3. A basket works well for gloves, sunglasses, or any other items you use daily.
4. A dry erase board will work great for reminders. Keep it close to the door so you see it each time you leave. This works great for the family as well.
5. Put an outgoing mail holder on the wall or on a small table.
6. Add a bin for returns you need to make and remember to include the receipts for each item.
7. Make an area for shoes, boots, and coats.
8. A hook for bookbags and coats for each of your children can be helpful.

Pets: If you have pets, you should also have a spot in this room to hold their leashes, travel gear, or any outside toys.

1. Gather up all walking supplies, toys, or travel gear for your pet.
2. Sort through things, removing any that are worn or no longer needed.

3. Set up a way to organize your pet's items.
 - A hook to hold their leash
 - A basket or bin for any outside toys
 - A closed bin to hold any travel gear

10 Minutes:

□ **Temporary Clutter:** It amazes me how quickly things can accumulate in a room—things that do not belong, but ones you don't want to purge either. I call this dislocated clutter. It is temporary clutter that simply needs to be put away. To help prevent this from happening in the future, I have included an extra step with this task that you don't want to miss!

1. Use a clothes basket to make this task much easier.
2. Gather up all the items that do not belong and put them into the basket.
3. Take a stroll around your home and put any items from your basket back where they belong.
4. Set up a bin, basket, tote, or box in your room to toss these items into as you come across them. This will be known as your "Catch All Bin." Each week, empty your catch all bin to keep it from overflowing.
5. Set up a basket or bin to hold any items that need to leave the home, such as:
 - Returns for the store
 - Packages that need to be mailed
 - Library books that need returned

□ **Accessories:** Ah, yes...the mystery of lost sock pairs tends to spill over into mittens and gloves. Help combat this by having a system in place for all outerwear and accessories.

1. Gather up all the gloves, mittens, scarves, and hats.
2. Sort through as you go, removing any that are torn or stained.
3. Pair up all the gloves and mittens setting aside any that are singles.
4. Either hold those singles to see if the others show up as you continue to organize your home or toss now.
5. Set up a simple system to house all of your outerwear. Try:
 - A large basket to hold it all
 - A small bin for each family member
 - A 3 stacked storage unit that will hold hats, gloves, scarves, etc.

6. When out of season, pack these items up and store with out of season coats and shoes. By keeping these items stored together in the off-season, you will always know just where your things are.

□ **Kid Zone:** If you have kids, especially school aged children, then you will want an organized area to always ensure they have what they need when they need it.

1. Find a way to set up an area specifically for your kids.
2. Install a hook on the wall with a basket or shelf directly below.
3. Store their bookbag and coat on the hook.
4. In the basket below, put their shoes and any outerwear that is in season.
5. If you also have a shelf, use this to hold sports items or additional items they need to take when they leave the home.
6. An empty picture frame on a shelf by the door or on the wall is a great way to stick reminders for any family member to see when they leave the home.
 - Appointment reminders
 - Rides from practices or games
 - After school commitments for that day
 - Permission slip or lunch money reminders
 - Notes that say, “I love you” are nice too

20 Minutes:

□ **Shoes:** Most homes have a small area designated as their mudroom. By keeping shoes and coats purged, you will help to keep this small space from becoming overwhelmed.

1. Gather up all the shoes.
2. Remove any that are in too bad of shape to keep.
3. Remove any that no longer fit.
4. Set up a way to house all shoes neatly:
 - A basket for each family member
 - A tray for most used shoes
 - A rug or a shelf to set shoes on
5. Keep dress shoes or less frequently worn shoes in the bedroom closet of the owner
6. Out of season shoes should, if they can, be stored in a basement, attic, or other storage area.

□ **Coats:** Just like with your shoes, keeping coats to seasonal or current only, will free up more space to allow this room to flow more smoothly.

1. Gather up all the coats.
2. Remove any that are in too bad of shape to keep.
3. Remove any that no longer fit.
4. Out of season coats should, if they can, be stored in a basement, attic, or other storage area.

The Craft Room or Hobby Room

If you are a crafter, you may be cringing a bit as you are reading this. Please do not worry—I am a crafter too, and I will guide you through this chapter with kid gloves.

I don't know what it is about crafting and the lovely supplies that go with it? But if you are a scrapbooker or card maker, then small pieces of pretty paper are no longer trash but a piece that you can possibly use in an upcoming project! The same holds true if you are a sewer or quilter. I am sure you too have pieces of fabric all over your room that you're refusing to throw away for fear you might need it someday for a sewing project.

The problem most crafters run into is we tend to keep so much that we bury all of our supplies under piles of “what ifs.” By keeping only the best, we will free up space to see all that we have and use more of what is there.

5 Minutes:

Ribbons: Ribbons can be a bit tricky to organize since they tend to unroll if stored the wrong way. Use these tips to help clean up your ribbons quickly:

1. Gather up all your spools of ribbon.
2. Go through them, keeping only the ones you know you will use.
3. Use a small skinny drawer basket to hold spools vertically and can sit on your table or even attach to the wall if you are a bit short on space.
4. You can keep the ribbons wound up or allow the ends to fall through the slats of the basket for even easier use.

Scrap pieces of ribbon should only be kept if you truly intend to use them. For the ones you are keeping, consider a small tote specifically for ribbon pieces. Label and keep close to your spools.

Thread: With so many colors to choose from, it's hard to have just one spool of thread! However, having 100 spools is not the answer either. You can also do this with your floss or yarn.

1. Gather up all your thread into a pile.
2. Toss any that are almost finished up.
3. Donate any triplicates especially if it's a color you do not often use.

4. Sort your threads by color family.
5. Use a tote, mason jar, or spool organizer to display what you have for easier use.
6. Missing a color? Write it on your errand list now so you won't forget later.

□ **Scissors/Punches:** Having quick and easy access to your scissors is helpful whether you are a paper crafter or a sewer.

1. Gather up all your scissors or punches, sorting as you go.
2. Use mason jars or a carousel specifically for these items to organize more easily.
3. Sort by theme if you have a large collection.

10 Minutes:

□ **Trash:** Always remove the trash to see just exactly what clutter you are dealing with. Easy to do in most rooms, but you might find this task a bit time consuming in this room. For that reason, we have moved it to the 10-minute area so you have a bit more time...but not too much!

1. Take two bags with you for this task—one bag is for trash, the other is for recyclables.
2. Immediately take both bags out of your home when finished.

□ **Markers/Pens/Pencils:** If you are a card maker or scrapbooker, there is nothing quite as frustrating as a dried-out marker or unsharpened pencil.

1. Gather up all your writing items, testing each one as you go on a piece of paper.
2. Toss any that are dry or partially dry.
3. Sharpen pencils in the same manner.
4. Sort into piles that work for you:
 - Markers
 - Pencils
 - Pens
 - By color
5. Use mason jars, cups, or even carousels to hold everything in a neat and tidy way.
6. Label if you like, using your creativity to spice it up in a style you love.
7. Keep close by, on the table for example, if they are items you use often.

□ **Die Cuts and/or Stamps:** These things are a bit tricky to organize, so rather than trying to find a system for the entire set, let's instead break things down into groups. Even this tip will cut your search time in half during your next project.

1. Gather up all your die cuts.
2. Sort as you go, donating any that are duplicates or ones you have outgrown or no longer love.
3. Sort what you are keeping into groups that make sense for how you craft:
 - Holidays
 - Seasons
 - Celebrations
 - Nature
 - Animals
 - Shapes
 - Borders
 - Fun
 - Misc.
4. Once sorted, house your die cuts in bins.
5. Glue a sample of each die cut to the outside of the container. This will keep you from having to look into each when searching for a particular die cut.

□ **Ink Pads:** With how expensive these can be, it is important to store them correctly so they last the longest.

1. Gather up all your ink pads.
2. Test each to ensure they have enough ink.
3. Partner refill bottles with their ink pad, rubber banding for easier storage.
4. Sort by color.
5. Store in clear totes.
6. Label each.

□ **Unfinished Projects:** There is nothing more frustrating than not completing a craft project on time. Luckily, I found a simple system to remedy this that you just might find helpful.

1. Take your unfinished project along with any unused supplies.
2. Place the project in a tote, box, or folder depending on the storage space it requires.
3. On a sheet of paper, write the project name and where you are in the project.
4. Also note any supplies still needed.
5. Finally, write the date the project is needed by, who it is for, and why you are making it.

6. Tape this paper to the outside of your box, tote, or folder.
7. Jot the finish by date on your planner or calendar to take it even one step further.
8. If you have more than one unfinished project, make a master sheet of all projects, along with dates by which they need to be completed. Tape this sheet to your room's door so you see it each time you enter the room. This visual reminder will keep nagging at you until all of your projects are finished up!

20 Minutes:

□ Declutter the Excess: If you are a hobbyist of any kind, I am sure you have a lovely collection of items needed to do what you love. Let's take some time to remove the extra clutter only so you can see all that you have and finally get those creative juices flowing again.

1. Take a large box and write DONATE right on the top in great big letters. This word will remind you that you are not throwing away valuable scraps but helping another get their own craft room up off the ground. This mindset will allow you to more easily remove the unused.
2. Set the timer for 20 minutes. This is usually not a step I include, but in this room, you will have temptations around every corner calling for you to stop and "play." The timer will help to keep you on task and focused.
3. Do an initial run-through around the room, grabbing the obvious items you no longer need.
4. Continue around the room over and over again until the timer ends.
5. Repeat this process weekly as time permits.

□ Material: I am sure if you are a sewer, you have a huge supply of material. There is nothing wrong with that at all, but if your pieces are in trash bags or buried altogether, you might want to look at things a bit. Digging for the right piece can be more time consuming than the project itself if you do not have a system in place. Rather than toss loads of material without a plan, let's instead set up a system and keep the best that this new system will allow.

1. Gather up all the material you have and sort into several piles. Do not spend too much time on this step. Be decisive and ruthless. Remember the hard work will all lead to a neat and tidy room that will inspire creativity! (Say this as many times as you need to during these tasks. ☺) Separate material by:

- Large pieces to keep
 - Small pieces to keep
 - Scrap pieces to keep
 - Donate
 - Toss – small scraps that are too little to donate
2. Set up a system that will hold the material you are keeping so it stays clean and dust free.
 3. Clear totes will work the best here making it easier to see what is inside without opening each one.
 4. Keep the totes loaded by theme, holiday, textile, or color.
 5. Fold the material and stack in a way that you can see easily the pieces from the outside.
 6. Label for even more organization.

□ Stickers: This is another area that can quickly get out of control if we do not keep on top of it. I had the hardest time coming up with a system for all of my stickers. I finally have one that works perfectly!

1. Gather up all of your stickers sorting as you go. Sort into:
 - Keep
 - Toss
 - Donate
2. Sort things down even further by:
 - A pile for each holiday
 - Birthday
 - Anniversary
 - Sympathy
 - Season
 - Children
 - Adult
 - Funny
 - Nature
 - Sports
 - Letters
 - Numbers
 - Misc.
3. Use an accordion file to hold your stickers, labeling each section from the list above. You may need more than one if you like to keep your stickers sorted down even further.

4. Label the outside of each file with the “theme” of what is inside for easier use.
5. Make sure all stickers are returned when you are finished. This part is a bit tricky in the beginning but put yourself into the habit so you never have to do this again.
6. As you are using your stickers and see you are running low or missing ones altogether, add them to your shopping list. This will ensure you always have the stickers you need when you need them.

□ Buttons: Rather than cover all the notions available, please use this as your guide to organizing any small embellishments for both the sewer and the paper crafter.

1. Gather up all your buttons into a pile.
2. If you have a small collection, sort by color or size.
3. If you have a large collection, pull out your favorites for easier use.
4. Keep large collections in mason jars.
5. Keep sorted/smaller collections in plastic organizers such as those used for fishing lures. I find these work perfectly for small items such as these.
6. Label the outside for easier use.

□ Paper: There is just something about paper—you can never seem to have too much!

1. Gather up all your paper and remove any that is damaged beyond use.
2. Sort your immense pile by color. I find this is the easiest way to keep things sorted. However, you can also do it by theme if that makes more sense to you.
3. As you are sorting, remove any that you no longer like. Set those sheets aside to give to a crafter friend. They will love you for it!
4. Use any type of paper organizer you prefer. I like the stacking office paper organizers for this. They are inexpensive, can be added to if needed, and hold quite a bit.
5. If your sheets are 12 x 12 the above option will not work, and you will have to order an organizer that will hold your papers.
6. When you organize by color, there is no need to label. If you are organizing by theme, you will want to label each tray for easier use.

The Garage and/or Shed

This extension of our homes tends to be an area that gets overlooked. It can be a junk room of epic proportions that we tend to turn a blind eye to every day.

A garage is not a storage room, yet when you ask folks what they keep inside of it, “a car” is usually the last thing that you hear. If you live in an area that does not usually have basements or even attics, a garage is the only storage available. However, storing a few seasonal items and using a garage to hold random amounts of junk, are two completely different things. For most, if not all, storage solutions, I recommend using plastic totes. Yes, there will be an initial investment but having the protection from dampness and rodents is definitely worth the money. Store it well so it lasts.

Just like the garage, a shed tends to be a place to toss it and forget it. Instead of using it as a giant toy box for adults, let’s sort clean it out and set it up to be a useful tool for outdoor activities.

Please note that for some tasks listed below, there are two boxes to check off. That simply means that particular task is relevant to both spaces. If you have a garage AND a shed, you will be able to perform each task in each specific area. Use the check boxes to keep track of each task as you complete them.

5 Minutes:

Trash: Take a minute to remove the trash so we can see just what needs to be decluttered.

1. Take two trash bags—1 for trash and 1 for recyclables.
2. Walk around your garage gathering up any trash you find.
3. Continue until you have covered the entire area.
4. Tie up the bags and remove.

Temporary Clutter: Set Up Your Zones: In a room such as this, zones are crucial to keep things from returning back to mad chaos. Zones are simply areas of a room that are designated for certain tasks. Take a look at your room, and make a mental list of all the things you do here. A few ideas are:

1. Lawn/property care – lawn mower, rake, shovel, sprinkler
2. Car care – oil, wash bucket/car wax, mechanical tools

3. House care – paint, tools, light bulbs
4. Holiday decorations
5. Kids – toys, sports equipment, pool toys
6. Pets – food, leashes, travel items
7. Trash – trash cans, recyclable cans, bags

Once you have set up your zones, you can more easily see what doesn't belong.

Regarding trash—if you must house your trash cans inside of your garage, you will want to find an area that is far away from your door to keep the smell out. Try to keep your trash bags close to the cans to make this step easier to do.

10 Minutes:

Temporary Clutter: It amazes me how quickly things can accumulate in a room—things that do not belong, but ones you don't want to purge either. I call this dislocated clutter. It is temporary clutter that simply needs to be put away. To help prevent this from happening in the future, I have included an extra step with this task that you don't want to miss!

1. Use a clothes basket to make this task much easier.
2. Gather up all the items that do not belong and put them into the basket.
3. Take a stroll around your home and put any items from your basket back where they belong.

Toys: Try to limit only outdoor toys in your garage. Remove any toys that are played with indoors to keep this area less cluttered.

1. Gather up all the toys.
2. Remove any that are broken or no longer played with.
3. Set up a system that is easy for the kids to clean up when done. A hinged plastic chest works best.

Holiday Decorations: If you do not have a basement or an attic, then the garage is the next logical choice to store your holiday decorations.

1. Gather up all of your seasonal décor.
2. Do not sort it now, but the next time you decorate, do a purge. Create a small tote for each of your children to hold any sentimental items for when they have a home of their own.

3. Decide where to house these items. A good place is an upper shelf that's out of the way since these items are rarely used. You can also build a shelving system specifically sized to hold totes.
4. Organize for easier use. The best way to do this is with totes. Fill with your seasonal décor and label the ends so you can easily find what you need.

☐☐ Pets: If you have outdoor pets, then you most likely store their supplies in your garage.

1. Gather up all the pet supplies, sorting as you go. Remove any that are broken or no longer needed.
2. Decide where to house these items.
3. Organize for easier use. Some options are:
 - A tightly sealed tote for food and treats
 - A few hooks to hold leashes and extra collars
 - A tote for brushes, poop bags, and toys
 - A shelf to hold travel carriers and other misc. supplies

20 Minutes:

☐☐ Lawn Care: Having all your lawn care items in one area will make this weekly chore a bit easier to do.

1. Gather up all your lawn care items.
2. Remove any that are broken beyond repair or that you do not use.
3. Determine how much room you need to hold everything you have.
4. Set up an area that will hold everything efficiently.
5. Vertical hanging systems for hand tools will effectively hold your things. PVC pipes attached to the wall will keep things orderly.
6. Hooks on the wall work well to hold electric trimmers and other heavy tools.
7. A drawer or small tote will hold smaller hand tools and gloves.

☐ Car Care: This is another important zone in a garage.

1. Gather up all the items you need to care for your car.
2. Remove any that are used up or need to be replaced.
3. Make a list of what you need to purchase.
4. Decide on a location to house these items.
5. Organize for easier use. Try:
 - A tote for all your cleaners and cleaning tools

- A cabinet or shelf out of reach of children for cleaning sprays, cloths, oils, and fluids
- A tool box for any tools needed to work on your car
- A work bench if you do more than just casual maintenance

□ House Care: If you do not have a basement, then the garage is usually the most logical area to store your house care items. This does not usually include cleaning supplies, although it can. If you have the room in your home for those items, you will free up more space in your garage.

1. Gather up all your cleaning supplies and try to find another place to keep them. A cabinet in the kitchen, a shelf in the laundry room, or even a basement is a good option for these items.
2. Gather up all your home care supplies—items needed for home care maintenance that tends to come up.
3. Decide where to keep these items.
4. Organize for easier use:
 - A shelf out of reach of children for paints, stains, and brushes
 - A bin for light bulbs
 - A bin for replacement parts.
 - A tool bench if you do more than regular household maintenance

□□ Gardening: Having an area set aside for your gardening tools is so important to any green thumb. This will not only keep things organized and easier to find, but will prevent you from purchasing duplicate tools.

1. Gather up all your gardening tools.
2. Sort as you go. Remove any that are broken.
3. Make a note of any items that need to be replaced.
4. Choose an area that will hold all your gardening equipment in a neat and easy-to-use way.
5. If you have room for a bench or counter, add one now.
6. Use a tote to hold any dirt or potting soil.
7. A shelf works great for planters and watering cans.
8. A basket can hold all your hand tools and gloves.
9. Wall hooks can hold shovels, rakes, and other larger tools.

The Vehicles

More often than not, when we are decluttering our homes, we tend to forget our cars. Some folks feel a car is just an extension of their home. It is filled with papers, toys, and clutter. The last thing you need while you are driving is a distraction, and yes, clutter is a distraction. Keeping our vehicles neat and tidy is not only important for safety reasons, but it will also prevent us from losing our things in all those cracks and crevasses.

All of these tasks are broken down into 5-minute quickies. Do them while you are waiting for your kids at practice or when you have some free time at home. Before you know it, your car will be neat and tidy!

5 Minutes:

Trash: Always remove the trash to see just exactly what clutter you are dealing with. Easy to do and super effective too!

1. Take two bags with you for this task—one bag is for trash, the other is for recyclables.
2. Immediately take both bags out of your home when finished.

Front Seat Area:

1. Remove anything that does not belong, and put it into a bag to be put away or donated.
2. Remove any trash as you find it.
3. Clean under the seats.
4. Empty and clean out any trays or compartments—don't forget the doors.
5. Replace any air fresheners, if necessary.
6. Do a quick wipe down of all the surfaces.

Back Seat:

1. Remove anything that does not belong, and put it into a bag to be put away or donated.
2. Remove any trash as you find it.
3. Clean under the seats.
4. Empty and clean out any trays or compartments—don't forget the doors.
5. Do a quick wipe down of all the surfaces.

6. If you have young children, a seat organizer will help to keep toys organized.

☐ Trunk:

1. Remove anything that does not belong, and put it into a bag to be put away or donated.
2. Remove any trash as you find it.
3. Check the spare tire and jack to make sure it is in good shape.
4. Do a quick wipe down of all the surfaces.
5. If you have kids in sports, a cooler to hold water and snacks will be helpful.
6. A tote made specifically for the trunk will help to keep sports equipment in place.

☐ Glove Box: Keep this area specifically for emergency support and car information.

1. Empty everything out, sorting as you go.
2. Toss the trash and set aside items that do not belong.
3. Check to make sure you have current information in regards to your car, such as registration if your state requires one.
4. Include your insurance company, agent, and phone number.
5. Extras to include: emergency contact information and a copy of your driver's license just in case you forget it.
6. The car owner's manual.

☐ Middle Console: Most cars have these now, and they are a good place to store any emergency items. Clean it out and consider adding the following:

1. A small flashlight
2. A window glass breaker
3. Seatbelt cutter
4. Mini first aid kit
5. Pepper spray
6. Pen and paper
7. Phone charger

☐ Under The Hood: While you are at it, check under the hood to ensure all your fluids are filled. Also, check your tire pressure. Simple things like this take seconds and will keep you safe on the road.

Outside

I never really talked about outside clutter before, so I really had no idea it was even a thing! However, once folks began complaining about the clutter strewn about their lawns and yards, I took a good look around and saw something a bit disturbing. Our lawn was cluttered too!

All this time, I prided myself on being a reformed clutter bug, so I never even saw that there were random items in my yard that desperately needed a home. That is what clutter is after all—items in need of a purpose and a home.

This chapter is going to be just a bit different since the elements will limit what we can do. If you have a garage, then you will want to house as much as you can there, rather than outside. You can refer to that chapter for ideas. If you have a shed, then you will also want to look there for storage options and can refer to that chapter for ideas. The goal is to get the things off our lawns and put away so they last.

5 Minutes:

Storage is key: When dealing with the outside, storage is the key to keeping things organized. It will also lengthen the life of your things by protecting them from the elements.

The bad news is the storage containers you need will require an initial investment. The good news is these containers are meant to last. Shaped just like a toy box with a hinged lid, these chest type containers will keep anything inside dry all year long. The one we bought at a garage sale for \$15 is still going strong after 11 years.

Determine the storage you will need:

1. To hold pillows on your patio—not only to lengthen the life of your pillows but also to ensure you have a dry place to sit
2. To hold pool toys or lawn toys
3. To hold pet toys
4. To hold gardening supplies
5. To hold tarps

The options are limitless, and all depend on what you need to keep outdoors.

□ **Lawn Ornaments:** If you like to decorate outside, then I am sure you have lots of fun and quirky things scattered about your lawn and flower beds. I love a good garden gnome as much as the next girl—the trick here is to remove it when it's past its prime.

1. Talk a stroll around your yard and look at your lawn art as you go. If something is broken, rusted beyond repair, or you no longer love it, gather it up.
2. Toss the broken and donate the rest.
3. If you live in an area with 4 seasons, you will want to store your lawn art in the snowy months. Snow can damage things quickly, so pack away your art and bring it out again in the spring.

10 Minutes:

□ **Trash:** Always remove the trash to see just exactly what clutter you are dealing with. Since we are outside and have a lot of area to cover, this might just take longer than 10 minutes. If so, you may want to tackle this in 10-minute increments.

1. Take two bags with you for this task—one bag is for trash, the other is for recyclables.
2. Walk your property and gather up any trash or recyclables you come across.
3. Immediately take bags to the trash as soon as you fill them up. Do not be tempted to toss them in a pile to deal with later.

□ **Bird Feeders:** Feeders of all kinds should be cleaned at least once a year. You can keep feed indoors to ensure it stays fresh. If you must store it outside, select a container that will keep things fresh and dry. Store away from direct sunlight.

1. Check feeders and remove any that are broken.
2. Clean if needed.
3. Set up storage that will handle the elements or keep feed inside.

20 Minutes:

□ **Temporary Clutter:** It amazes me how items end up outside—things that don't belong outside, but ones you don't want to purge either. I call this dislocated clutter. It is temporary clutter that simply needs to be put away.

1. Make it a family affair. Call the kids and even the hubby to help with this one.

2. Gather up all the items that do not belong, yet you still want to keep.
3. If it belongs inside, you will want to clean it before bringing it in.
4. Set a weekly chore of yard pickup. This is a great job for the kids to do. If you select storage that is clearly labeled and easy to use, they will definitely be able to do this weekly chore for you.

□ Animals: If you have pets that are outside, designating an area strictly for them will really help to keep your yard more decluttered.

1. Choose a spot to keep your animals' things. If you house your animals in a kennel, next to that will be a good place.
2. If you do not have room to store your pet's food indoors, purchase a container that is good quality to keep the elements out, along with any stray animals or rodents.
3. Store this container away from direct sunlight.
4. Clean out monthly to ensure things are not getting infested with mildew or bugs.

□ Gardening: I love to play in the dirt, so having lots of tools and gloves lets me do just that. Having a spot set up to hold pots, soil, seeds, tools, and other items will keep you from hunting for things when you need them.

1. Gather up all your gardening items.
2. Purge as you go:
 - Toss what is broken
 - Donate what you no longer need or use
3. Designate a spot in your garage or shed for your gardening items.
4. If you do not have a spot, then you will want to consider an outdoor storage container.

□ Lawn Care: These items should be kept indoors to ensure their quality lasts. A garage, shed, or covered porch will all work here.

1. Gather up all lawn care items:
 - Mower
 - Watering tools
 - Trimmer
 - Rakes, shovels, etc.
2. Find a central spot to store these items.
3. Note anything that needs to be repaired or replaced.
4. If you do not have a shelter, then house lawn care items together and cover with a heavy-duty tarp for protection.

Well, look at you my decluttering friend!

You made it to the end!

I hope you were able to make strides in your home and remove bags and boxes of clutter and stuff.

Remember, decluttering isn't a fix it once and be done forever kind of thing. It is a new way of thinking about our belongings. The items in our home are tools specifically meant to help us complete a task. It's the family in our homes that mean the most—not the papers, spatulas, clothes, or books. As you learn to distinguish what is important and what is not, you will begin to see your things in a different light. As you do, the clutter will begin to disappear and will stay gone forever.

No more will you have rooms that you hide behind a closed door. You'll now have inviting spaces that bring a smile to your face each time you are in them.

No longer will your kitchen table be buried under a mountain of random items and piles of papers threatening to topple at any minute. Your table will now be a space that your family will gather around for meals, games, and laughter.

No more will you cringe at the thought of guests coming over to visit. Instead, you will look forward to making memories with friends in your comfortable and inviting home.

But what if you are looking around right now and there is still so much more? What if your counters are still covered and your closets are still overflowing?

Don't worry! I have a little extra help that will get you out from under the clutter once and for all.

Let me introduce you to [Declutter & Simplify Boot Camp](#)—a hands-on, group led, all for one and one for all approach to decluttering every room in your home.

We open the doors to our live course only twice a year for just a handful of students.

This is an intensive real-time decluttering course that we take as a group and only move on to the next chapter when we are ready.

This is the last course you will need to declutter, pare down, streamline, and organize every single drawer, closet, and room in your home.

Since doors only open twice a year, you'll want to make sure you don't miss it—you can sign up for the “Let me know!!” list and get an email when we are ready.

If you are still frustrated by the clutter around you, I encourage you to read more about what this course has to offer.

Get info on the [Declutter & Simplify Boot Camp](#) and wait list here!

Cleaning out all the excess is not a do it once and done project. I wish it were that simple. For clutter bugs like us, we need to take it slow and learn new habits so the clutter never comes back.

Once you do, you will not have to worry if the piles will return or if the mess will show up again because your things will all have a purpose and therefore a home. And that, my friend, is the secret sauce to a neat and peaceful house.

Decluttering is not a chore—it's a lifestyle—one I encourage you to begin trying now.

Before I go, I would like to extend an invitation to our quickly growing [Declutter & Simplify Facebook Group](#). Join us for weekly challenges and inspiration to continue on your path to cleaning up and cleaning out.

Join the [Facebook group here!](#)

Happy decluttering!

Tracy Lynn 

My Best Decluttering Tips

As with any organizing or decluttering adventure, you will learn a couple tips and tricks of your own along the way. These are a few of my favorites!

Tip #1: If you are moving any items to another room in your home, such as medicine from the kitchen to the bathroom or seasonal coats from the mudroom to the attic, you might just run the risk of forgetting where those items are when you need them again.

Take a notecard and write up the item and the new location. Stick it where you originally stored those items. When you go looking for them in the future, that notecard will remind you where they are now, keeping you from tearing your house apart looking for things.

Tip #2: When creating a new system for a room or area, the intentions we had in our head at the time we set it up might not be ones we remember later on. Write up a list of all the steps you need to take when you perform a task in your newly organized area. Place it in a sheet protector and tape to your door, shelf, or cabinet. This will not only help remind you but your family as well. Use the [Room System](#) printable found in the bonus section to help.

Tip #3: As you fill up a donation box, you will want to immediately seal it and put it directly into your car. This “out of sight, out of mind” trick will keep you and your family from digging back into those purged items.

Tip #4: If you receive packages in the mail that are inside of a delivery box, do not throw the box away. Instead fill that box up with clutter and put it directly into your car for donation. This little tip will help keep your home clutter free in the future.

Tip #5: If you are on a tight schedule for your decluttering, such as you have guests coming in a month or you are moving soon, use a goals sheet to keep things organized on your schedule.

Use the [Room Goals](#) printable in the bonus section to help you plan out your decluttering projects and ensure you get it all done in time. Post this sheet where you will see it every day as a reminder to get it done!

Tip #6: Family kitchen sale! If you have teens or older children in your home, then decluttering their closet might be a bit tricky. Instead, have them remove any clothing they no longer love or wear. Put those items on the kitchen table for other siblings to “shop” through. This tip will not only get their closets cleaned out a bit but will also make hand me downs a bit easier on the younger kids. When they are in charge of the hand me downs, they are more apt to wear them. Donate any that do not get claimed.

Tip #7: As you are working your way through these minute tasks, make sure to keep a list nearby. Write down anything you see you need as you go—maybe you are out of food or see you need a coat replaced or you want to add some hooks or install a shelf?

By writing those items down, you will know they will not be forgotten. Be thorough when you list things for an organizing project. Include exactly what you need, (style and size) where you need it, and what you will be using it for.

Tip #8: Don't just donate all the things you no longer need or want. If you have a large amount, plan to hold a summer yard sale. If it is off-season, sell those items on Facebook or Craigslist. Use any money you earn to buy tools for systems to keep your home streamlined and organized.

Tip #9: My favorite organizing tip is always going to be use baskets. The number one reason why we cannot keep our homes organized is

because we do not put our things away when we are finished with them. To combat this, simply place a basket in every room where clutter tends to form, preferably near the door or entryway. When you find an item that does not belong in a room, just toss it in the basket. Once a week, or more often if needed, empty your baskets putting everything inside away where it belongs. No more clutter!

Tip #10: Sticking with the basket theme—this tip is about the weekend basket. Another favorite of mine that I learned years ago. As you come across papers that do not require immediate attention, such as bills, permission slips, sales flyers, or catalogs, put them all into a basket or bin. When a day comes where you are lounging around, (for me it's the weekend) take your basket and go through each paper. Have a notepad or Post-it notes nearby to jot down any notes. No more missing papers or paper clutter piles!

Tip #11: 10-minute tidy is another favorite I learned from a child's show of all places back when my boys were young. Each night before a story could be read, my boys had to take a few minutes to tidy up their room. They did not need to fully clean it, just tidy it up a bit. This tip worked so well that I now do it every single night before bed. Waking up to a tidy home is my sanity saver and with it taking only 10 minutes, a very worthy investment.

Tip #12: To encourage your kids to help out with the clutter more, especially in their rooms, keep it simple. Things do not have to be perfect in their rooms but being able to walk to their beds in the middle of the night without stepping on a Lego (the worst pain I think I have ever felt in my life) will be a great place to start. Have plenty of bins, baskets, and totes so cleaning up is super simple for them to do. No rules—just get things off the floor and in a container of some sort. As they get older, you can sort things down a bit. But for now, just help them learn to tidy up as simply as possible.

Tip #13: Most folks do not declutter because they are not sure what to keep and what to remove. There are a few rules to remember when decluttering that might help you out a bit:

1. If you love it, use it, or need it...then you may keep it.
2. If you do not have room for it, then remove something else or let it go.
3. If it is a duplicate and costs little to replace, let it go.
4. If it is broken, let it go.
5. If it is stained, torn, or no longer fits, let it go.
6. If you have not used it in over a year and it is not an heirloom, let it go.

Learning to only keep the tools you need to do the tasks you perform in your home will help to distinguish what is clutter (excess things) and what is not (things we love, use, or need).

Tip #14: Remove 5 things every single day until your clutter is under control. This little tip will be super simple to do, not overwhelming at all, and you will turn decluttering into a habit without even realizing it. 5 items a day adds up to 150-155 items a month and 1,825 items in a year. BOOM.

Tip #15: Have a spot to drop your keys, sunglasses, purse, and anything else that you routinely take with you when you leave your home. This will keep you on time, and you will never misplace those keys again.

Tip #16: Keep a donation box in your home at all times. I have been decluttering now for 10+ years, and I still always have an open box in my home. As I go about my day and come across an item I no longer love, use, or need—into the box it goes. Once full, it is immediately put into the trunk of our car and dropped off next time we are out. This will always keep your home free from piles of clutter.

Tip #17: Set up a memory tote for each of your children or grandchildren. Inside, include a few heirlooms or memories that you can

pass on to them. This will remove some of the excess from your home and pass on a treasure to your family. Label items so your kids will know why it meant so much to you.

Tip #18: Once you have your memories or heirlooms pared down, you will now be able to display a few of your favorites. Get those items out where you can see, remember, and smile at the memory they bring up.

Tip #19: If you don't need it, don't buy it...but if you must, make room before it leaves the bag. A rule that I use to keep too many things from taking over my home is, if an item comes in—then an item must go. This keeps knickknacks and clutter from taking over my rooms and keeps me from getting bored with the pretty things around me.

Tip #20: Do your kids have way too many toys? Divvy them up into 4 boxes, totes, or bags, and put them high up on a closet shelf. Every few months, take a box, tote, or bag down and dump it right out on the floor. Watch them squeal with delight at the pile of “brand new” toys in front of them. As they are playing, fill your bag back up with a new set of toys and place it onto the shelf. This little tip will not only keep their rooms from being overrun with toy clutter but will also save you a mint at the store too!

Tip #21: Finally, you will want to declutter your schedule too. Having more things to do than you have hours in your day will not only overwhelm you, but it will turn a good mood sour in no time. Each Sunday, make a list of all the things you need to get done in the upcoming week. Each morning, look at your list and choose a few important items to get to that day. It really is as simple as that, and this one little tip will keep your days calm and efficient. A decluttered home is one thing, a decluttered schedule is a game changer! Read more on this: [Declutter Your Schedule](#).

room system



Room: _____

What will happen in this room?

room system



Room: _____

What will happen in this room?

room goals



Room:

Room:

Room:

Room:

Room:

Room:

month: _____ what needs done this week

MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY	
4:00		4:00		4:00	
5:00		5:00		5:00	
6:00		6:00		6:00	
7:00		7:00		7:00	
8:00		8:00		8:00	
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6:00		6:00		6:00	
7:00		7:00		7:00	
8:00		8:00		8:00	
9:00		9:00		9:00	

TOP 3 TASKS		TOP 3 TASKS		TOP 3 TASKS	
1					
2					
3					

MENU		MENU		MENU	

year: _____

plan it so you do it!

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

4:00		4:00			
5:00		5:00			
6:00		6:00			
7:00		7:00			
8:00		8:00			
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7:00		7:00			
8:00		8:00			
9:00		9:00			

SUNDAY

TOP 3 TASKS

TOP 3 TASKS

TOP 3 TASKS

MENU

MENU

MENU

--	--	--

make each minute count!



MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

DAILY DECLUTTERING TASKS

MENU

WEEKLY DECLUTTERING GOALS

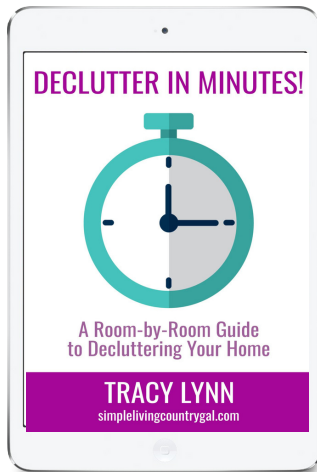
SHOPPING

NOTES

some of our products



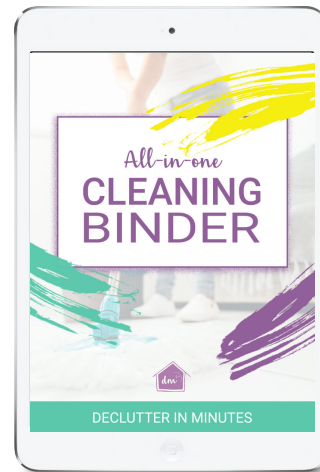
Use coupon code **DECLUTTER30** for 30% off!



Declutter in Minutes eBook

5, 10, & 20-minute tasks to declutter room by room.

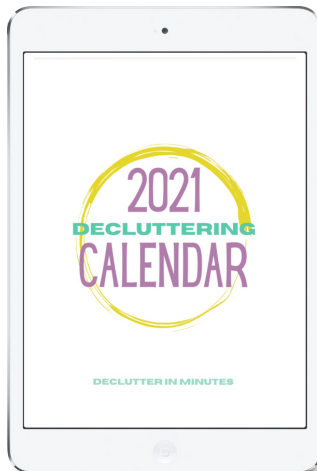
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All in One Cleaning Binder

Step by step process for cleaning your house easier

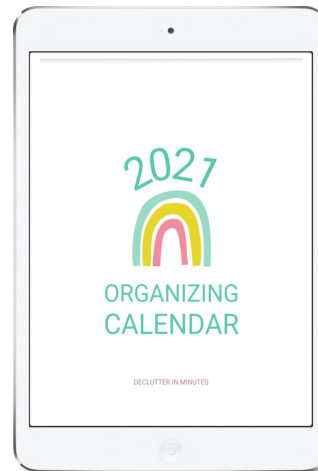
<https://declutterinminutes.com/cleaning>



Decluttering Calendar

Simple daily tasks to remove the excess from your home.

<https://declutterinminutes.com/clutter>



Organizing Calendar

Simple daily tasks to help you organize a home you love.

<https://declutterinminutes.com/organize>

