



From Appendix 1 of *Clutter Free*

The Three-Box, Two Bag System

This is a system you will be using in almost every room in your house, so I want you to gather up everything that you'll need right now:

Set up **three cardboard boxes**, a **garbage bag**, and a **recycle bag**, your iPod, and a timer (you can use the one on your cell phone or your oven).

Mark one cardboard box **“Other Rooms,”** one **“Put Back,”** and one **“Give Away.”**

Give yourself fifteen minutes on your timer and pick a spot to clean out (an area no larger than what you can sort through in fifteen minutes).

Go through the area and use the three boxes to sort the contents.

Other Rooms Box

Anything that doesn't belong in the area you're cleaning goes into the “Other Rooms” box. This includes toys in the kitchen, dog brushes in the living room, report cards in the bathroom, or dishes in the bedroom.

Put Back Box

This is the box where you put things that belong in the area you're cleaning, but they need to be put back in the right place. If you're straightening up your bedroom, examples of items that you would place in this box are clean clothes on the floor, shoes under your bed, or scarves hanging over a bedroom chair. These all go in the “Put Back” box so once you have your bedroom in order, you just put those items back where they belong.

Give Away Box

Clothes your kids have outgrown? Check. Videos your family will never watch again? Check. There is huge freedom in giving stuff away. Here is a great set of criteria for keeping or giving away an item:

- » Is it something you or a family member is currently using or wearing?
- » Is it something that makes you or a family member happy when they see it?
- » Is it something you or a family member will definitely use in the next six months?
- » If you can answer yes to one or more of those questions, find a home for the item. If not, away it goes.

And a friendly reminder: don't donate garbage. It costs charities time and money to get rid of stuff that you don't want. Don't be that person. Donate only those things that are in decent condition and are worthy of reselling.

Garbage Bag

Anything that you don't want and that isn't worthy of being donated or can't be recycled goes in here.

Recycle Bag

Recycling regulations vary from city to city, so check with your local municipality or disposal service if you have any question about what should be recycled and what shouldn't.

Once you've cleaned out your chosen area, take the "Other Rooms" box and go around the house putting away all the stuff in that box. Take the "Give Away" box to where you gather stuff to donate or directly to your car to be donated the next time you run errands. Now, since your area is clean and organized, put anything in the "Put Back" box into the spot it's supposed to go.

If this feels totally overwhelming to you, consider having a supportive friend or someone you hire go through these steps for you. There's a lot of freedom in a fresh start.