



From Chapter 24 of *Clutter Free*

50 Things to Get Rid of Today

Sometimes the first step to decluttering is actually taking a step.

And so to start, I came up with this list of things you can get rid of right now. Today.

Other people's stuff

You are not someone else's storage unit. If clutter is an issue in your life, one of the first things you must do to recover is to stop enabling others. Your grown children need to come get their stuff. If they live across the country, and have boxes upon boxes stored at your house, ask them to tell you what items they want, and you can send them to them.

If they are local, do what we did with our son Jeremy. We gave his six boxes a move-out date. To Goodwill. At 11:30 on the night of the move out, Jeremy was in our garage, wading through boxes. After four years of storing things, he took exactly twelve items from his boxes. We got our shelves back.

Magazines

I have a couple of magazine subscriptions that I still hold on to because they are free and I read them each month. But I give myself a time limit to read each issue (the month that's still on the cover), and then I walk the expired issues over to my neighbor. She shares a free subscription with me, and I don't have the paper clutter lingering in my house. If you want to save a particular recipe or article for future reference, snap a picture of it. Try the free app Keepy for a super high-tech way to save precious papers.

Extra food

People are reluctant to give up food because "I paid good money for it." But if your pantry is so stuffed that you don't know what you have anymore, it is costing you money because you are most likely rebuying ingredients you don't need. Clear it out and donate the nonperishables that aren't past their "best by" date to a local food bank, an adult child, or a friend who has fallen on hard times.

Duplicates

Remember back in the old days when you didn't know what you had because you had too much clutter, so you bought a wok because, even though you knew you had one somewhere, you couldn't find it (and then found it two weeks later under some tablecloths in the basement)? Well, it's time to give that second wok away.

Guilt gifts

Get rid of anything that anyone gave you that you don't love.

Any toy from the Dollar Store

'Nuff said.

Any toy from a Happy Meal

Anything that doesn't have all of its parts

Puzzles, toys, games, crafts. If it's just missing one part and it can be replaced, go online and order the missing part or contact the manufacturer. If you are planning to wait until you have time, someday, then just get rid of it now. Someday will never come.

"Just in case" items

You know that pair of high-waisted mom jeans you're hanging on to "just in case"? (Just in case they come back into fashion or you need them for an eighties party or all your other clothes are dirty.) Pitch 'em.

Your child's artwork

Again, take a picture with an app like Keepy and then throw it away.

You child's homework or school project

Things that need to be fixed

If you've held on to that purse for a year because a buckle needs to be repaired, those pants need to be hemmed, or that vacuum needs to go into the shop, either take it this week or get rid of it. Give yourself a deadline to make it happen so that it will stop being clutter and start being useful.

Cards

Whenever I receive a card, I put it up on my red hutch to look at for a while. But how long are you supposed to have the card on display in your house? And when it's time to take it down, am I supposed to save it or throw it away? Reminds me of this scene from a *Seinfeld* episode:

Kristin: You got the card I sent?

Jerry: I did.

Kristin: So where is it?

Jerry: What?

Kristin: The card. Is this it in the trash?

Jerry: No.

Kristin: This is my card, you threw it away.

Jerry: Well—

Kristin: I put a lot of thought into this card.

Jerry: You signed your name and you addressed the envelope, it's not like you painted the picture and wrote the poem.

Kristin: Fine. I gotta get back to the office.

Jerry: Why, because I threw the card out? How long was I supposed to save it?

Kristin: You have no sentimentality.

Jerry: I have sentimentality, really, I'm sentimental. Here, look. Here's some cards I've saved, these are birthday cards from my grandmother, see, I'm not a bad guy.

Kristin: Oh, so you save her cards but not mine! Oh great!

New scene. Jerry and George are at the coffee shop.

Jerry: It was a thank-you card from Kristin because I'm doing the PBS drive. I mean, how long am I supposed to keep it?

George: The rule is a minimum of two days.

Jerry: You making that up or do you know what you're talking about?

George: I'm making it up.

Stained clothes

Yes, you are allowed to give it one more shot with the miracle stain remover your sister found on Pinterest. After that, it's time to recycle or throw away.

Extra toilet paper rolls, egg cartons, juice can lids, empty pudding cups, clean meat trays, or anything else you've been stashing for art projects

If you have an art project in mind (and are the kind of person who actually does art projects), you have my permission to keep as many as you will need for the project. Otherwise, recycle what you can.

Potted plants

If you have a black thumb and plants die on you all the time, you have my permission to give them away to someone who isn't a plant murderer.

Printer cartridges

For printers you don't even own anymore? Get rid of them.

Any tool or component for something you don't own anymore

This goes for those little Allen wrenches, gadgets, gizmos, whatever.

Spare buttons that come in little plastic bags on clothes

Are you really going to sew the button onto the sweater that you probably donated three years ago?

Books

I'm a huge bookworm and I completely condone keeping as many books as you think you'll read or use again. But if it's something you probably will never pick up again, then donate it.

Cookbooks

Same goes for cookbooks. If you never open it, you will probably never cook from it.

Mugs

I use the same three coffee mugs every day. And thus the "I heart New Mexico" mug that has been sitting at the back of my cabinet for three years collecting dust needs to find a new home.

Well-loved pet toys

Yes, you may get the urge to carefully scrub the grime off the pet toy with a toothbrush and to whip out a needle and thread to sew the hole your dog chewed in it. But most likely, it just needs to be tossed.

Well-loved towels

Once a dish or bath towel starts to get grungy, you're not going to use it anyway, are you? So toss it. Save a few as rags and get rid of the rest.

Home décor that doesn't fit your style anymore

That light-blue ceramic goose that you bought in 1992 to go with your ceramic farmhouse collection? Yeah, it's not going to come back into style, and you are no more likely to decorate your mantel with ceramic farm animals now than you were then.

Picture frames

Just like the ceramic goose, some frames go out of style. Take out the picture and put it in an album for posterity and donate the frame.

Stuffed animals

Does your kid really need 2,234 stuffed animals to keep her company at night? Have her choose her 6 favorites and donate the rest.

Mismatched socks

No, the sock monster isn't going to appear with the match to all the missing socks you've been storing for years. Toss them.

Old undies

Likewise, there is a time and a place for old underwear—you know, the ones with holes in them that you wear only when all the other pairs are dirty. And that time is now and that place is in the garbage.

Your husband's old undies (see above)

DVDs that you haven't watched in more than a year

Yes, I get that the retro copy of *The Parent Trap* is sentimental, but if you haven't watched it in a year, then you should probably donate it. No use taking up shelf space for something you'll never watch again.

VHS tapes and cassette tapes

As a general rule of thumb, if you don't have the device to watch or listen to something, then you probably shouldn't own it.

Old bedding

I stored the comforter I used on my twin bed as a girl for something like twenty years "just in case" I ever wanted to use it again. Well, guess what? My taste for Rainbow Brite room décor still hasn't resurrected itself, and the comforter is so grungy that I can't imagine sleeping under it anyway.

Shoes that hurt your feet

I know they are cute. I know they would look great with your blue skirt. But if they hurt, you will never wear them. Donate them.

Old cell phones

Keep one working in case of emergencies? Yes. Six? No way.

Old cell-phone accessories

If it's more than three years old, no one wants it. Promise.

"Free" cups from amusement parks

I know you paid seventeen dollars for the refillable cup, but you don't get free refills at your house. Let it go.

Pictures of people you don't like

Just because you are related doesn't mean that person's photo needs to be in your house.

Old curtains

If you buy a bigger house, you are not going to want to hang old curtains in it.

Uncomfortable bras

I hereby give you permission, no matter how much you spent on them. Pitch them.

Old prescription glasses

Keep one for emergencies and donate the others.

Old computer parts

Old phone systems

Any free pens that you've received (or accidentally stolen)

Cheap pens are cheap for a reason.

Any piece of furniture you don't use and you don't love no matter how much you paid for it

Flat pillows

Life is too short.

Candleholders

Because, let me guess, you've been given a dozen as gifts. You can't love them all.

Anything that has been stuck to your fridge for more than a year

Those keys that've been on your ring for over three years and you don't know what they go to

Anything with the name of a city on it