

De-Cluttering Your Living Space Doesn't Have to be That Difficult

When I'm helping people list their homes for sale, I always recommend that they de-clutter their living spaces so that their homes will show better.

There are two reasons for doing this. First, it makes it easier for prospective buyers to see themselves in the home because they aren't looking at tons of personal items belonging to the sellers. Second, it makes the home look more organized and clean, giving the impression that its owners pay attention to details, including home maintenance.

For some people, this de-cluttering effort can be difficult. To help, here are some great ideas that I've heard over the years. Even if you aren't moving or selling your home, take a look at these ideas for de-cluttering your life.

1. Identify your clutter collection areas and then tackle them.

If your house is like mine, you probably have several



“collection” areas where everybody dumps their stuff. A good way to tackle this clutter is to identify each of these clutter traps and dedicate an hour each week to them. Sort the items into those you really need and want to keep, and those you should look at and then throw out. It might be helpful to use a plastic organizer box, giving each

family member an assigned compartment for those keeper items.

2. Give each family member a “junk container”.

Similar to the plastic organizer box system I mentioned in #1, you could give each family member a junk container or basket. When you see anybody’s stuff throughout the house, you can put it in the basket and make each individual responsible for putting it back in their rooms. You can put these containers on the stairs, so they won’t forget them on the way to their rooms. This also allows for easy collection and moving of the baskets right before a showing.

3. Use compartmentalized boxes for small items, like batteries.

Similar to the plastic organizer suggestion in #1, these boxes can come in very handy when trying to organize a drawer or cabinet. They work great for organizing batteries, keys and more.

4. Get rid of your old books.

As a “green” Realtor and a person who loves to recycle, this is one of my favorites. There are lots of ideas for getting rid of old books, including donating children’s books to a local library and giving books that you’ve read to family and friends. As for cookbooks, only keep the ones that you use frequently. If you have a cookbook that only has a few recipes you like, photocopy them and keep them in a binder. That way, you can give away lots of cookbooks that you rarely use.

5. Open your mail next to the recycling bin so you can immediately purge unwanted junk mail.

This is another environmentally-friendly idea that I love. It makes you look at the mail once and immediately get rid of those pieces you don’t want to see again.

Finally, a tip for getting your house ready for the day: When picking up bedrooms, always make the bed first. That way it can serve as a mission control center for organizing and folding. It also will make any other clutter easy to pinpoint and attack because messy stuff stands out next to the neatly-made bed.