

Stay Organized and Clutter-Free

Once you've simplified and organized your home, keep it in good shape with these tips.

Give everything a place. Designate a place for everything you own—from remote controls and keys to phone chargers and paperwork—and purchase storage bins to keep it all contained.

Do a clutter check each week. Schedule an hour to sort and organize anything that's out of place. If your home is large, assign each room a day of the week for 10-15 minutes. Breaking the task down by day and room will make it more manageable, especially if you have a busy schedule.

Create a drop zone. The kitchen and living room tend to collect things from all over the house, so leave a bin in these rooms to collect items that belong elsewhere. At the end of the week, put things away. If the items in the bin are mostly toys and games, make it your children's responsibility to put them away.

Rethink your purchases. In order to live a simpler, less-cluttered life, consciously think about what you want versus what you really need. To maintain a constant number of items in your home, commit to donating a similar item each time you purchase a new one. For example, if you purchase a new book, donate one to the library, or if you'd like to purchase a new coat, donate your old one to a local charity.

Organize every few months, especially if you have children. Kids tend to outgrow clothes, games, toys and other items very quickly, especially babies, toddlers and early school-age children. Sorting through items every few months will ensure that their bedrooms and playroom remain tidy and under control.

Streamline paperwork. Sign up for paperless billing for all of your monthly bills, credit cards, utilities, etc. If you wish to keep your monthly statements, you can save a digital version to a folder in the cloud, where it's easy to find later. For paperwork that isn't digital, review your files annually and shred anything you don't need anymore. While you may want to hang on to your tax paperwork for several years, items such as trash bills, old bank statements, etc., can often be shredded.

