DECLUTTERING YOUR HOME

A practical guide to deciding what stays, what goes and what still belongs in your life.

A CLEARER HOME.
A SIMPLER LIFE.
A BRIGHTER NEXT CHAPTER.



WELCOME

It’s Okay.

You don’t have to do it all at once.

If your home feels full, disorganized, or simply harder to manage than it used to, you’re not alone.

Decluttering can bring up more than decisions about things. There can be memories, guilt, uncertainty, family expectations, and the feeling that you should have dealt with it sooner.

You don’t need to solve all of that today.

This guide is designed to help you make thoughtful decisions at your own pace. You don’t have to get rid of everything. You don’t have to create a perfectly organized home.

The goal is simply to create a home that works better for the life you’re living.

> PART OF THE 3R METHOD™
>
> This guide is part of the 3R Method™: Reflect · Relocate · Rejoice. It belongs to **Relocate**: *Plan your move calmly, one step at a time.* You don’t need to be moving to use it.



GETTING STARTED

Start With Your Why

Before you start sorting, get clear about what you want to change.

Decluttering is easier when you know what you're working toward.

Maybe you're preparing to sell. Maybe you're getting ready for a move. Maybe your home simply feels harder to manage than it used to. Or perhaps you want less visual noise, less maintenance and more space to enjoy the things that matter.

There is no wrong reason to declutter.

What prompted me to start?

Was there a specific event, change or realization? What made you think, *something needs to change?*

How does my home feel right now?

Does it feel crowded, stressful, difficult to maintain or simply no longer suited to the way I live?

What do I want my home to feel like?

Think beyond how you want it to look. Do you want more calm? More space? Easier routines? Less maintenance?

What would make this effort worthwhile?

Be specific. Maybe it's clearing the garage, simplifying the kitchen, making a room usable again or preparing your home for its next chapter.

What's made this difficult in the past?

Time? Energy? Attachment? Not knowing how to start? Understanding the obstacle can help you choose a better approach this time.

KEEP IT REALISTIC

Set a Realistic Goal

Define what success looks like for you. Keep the goal specific and achievable.

Don't Aim for Perfect

The goal isn't to sort everything in one weekend. Improvement matters more than perfection. Some areas will be easier than others. That's normal.

Be Kind to Yourself

Some possessions carry memories, history or emotion. If a decision feels difficult, give yourself permission to pause and come back to it later.

You don't have to transform your whole home at once. One thoughtful decision is still progress.

DECIDING

The Questions That Help You Decide

You don't need a perfect system. You need a better question.

When you're deciding what to do with something, try looking beyond whether you've used it recently.

Does it matter to me?

Does it have meaning, usefulness or genuine value in your life?

Does it fit the life I'm living now?

Are you keeping it because you use it, or because you used to?

Would I choose to bring it with me?

If you moved tomorrow, would you make room for this in your next home?

If I let it go, what am I actually giving up?

Sometimes the answer is very little. Sometimes an item genuinely matters. Give yourself permission to see the difference.

"What if I need it someday?"

This is one of the hardest questions. Instead, ask: How likely is that need? What would it cost to replace? Would I actually choose to keep this if I were making the decision today?

The goal isn't to own as little as possible. It's to make thoughtful decisions about what still belongs in your home and your life.



PACE

Make the Process Manageable

Small steps are easier to finish than big projects.

Decluttering can become overwhelming when you look at your entire home as one enormous task.

Instead, make the work smaller.

Start Small

Choose a drawer, shelf, closet, cupboard or small section of a room.

Finishing something small creates momentum.

Set a Time Limit

Try 20 or 30 minutes rather than committing to an entire day.

When the time is up, you can stop, or continue if you still have the energy.

Work With Your Energy

Some decisions require more concentration than others.

Do the harder work when you have the most energy and leave simpler tasks for when you're tired.

Take Breaks and Stay Safe

Decluttering can be physically and emotionally tiring. A break isn't giving up. It's part of the process.

Be careful with heavy items, ladders and high shelves. Ask for a hand rather than lifting or climbing alone.

You don't need a weekend-long marathon. Consistent small steps can change a home.

THE METHOD

Five Decisions

You don’t need to decide everything in one of two ways.

Not every item needs an immediate **keep** or **throw away** decision. Use these five choices to make the process more manageable.

1. **Keep**
   This belongs in your life because you use it, need it, love it or genuinely value it.

2. **Pass Along**
   Someone else could use, appreciate or enjoy it. This might mean giving it to family or friends, donating it or finding another useful home for it.

3. **Sell**
   The item has enough value that selling it makes sense, and the time and effort involved are worthwhile.

4. **Decide Later**
   Some decisions are genuinely difficult. Put uncertain items in a clearly defined temporary place and give yourself a specific date to revisit them. “Decide later” should be a pause, not permanent storage.

5. **Recycle or Discard**
   The item is no longer useful, meaningful, wanted or worth the space it occupies. Letting it go doesn’t erase its history or significance.

You are not deciding whether an object is good or bad. You are deciding whether it still belongs in your life.

ROOM BY ROOM

Work Through Your Home One Area at a Time

You don't need to declutter the whole house at once.

A room-by-room approach gives you a clear place to begin and makes progress easier to see.

1 Choose One Area
2 Sort by Category
3 Use Your Five Decisions
4 Finish the Area
5 Then Move On

1 · Choose One Area

Start with somewhere manageable rather than the most emotionally difficult space in your home.

2 · Sort by Category

Within that area, work through similar things together when it makes sense: clothing, books, paperwork, kitchen items, tools.

3 · Use Your Five Decisions

For each item, decide:

Keep · Pass Along · Sell · Decide Later · Recycle or Discard

4 · Finish the Area

Don't leave piles from one room scattered throughout the house. Complete the decision-making and move items to their next destination.

Once something has been donated, sold or discarded, move it out of the space. Otherwise, yesterday's decision can become tomorrow's reconsideration.

5 · Then Move On

Once one area is finished, choose the next. Progress is easier to maintain when you can see it.

SENTIMENTAL ITEMS

The Hardest Things to Let Go Of

Sometimes the object isn't the difficult part.

Some things are easy to sort. Others carry memories, relationships, expectations or a sense of identity.

Family Heirlooms

You can value where something came from without automatically keeping it forever.

Ask yourself whether you genuinely want it, whether you have space for it and whether it still has a meaningful place in your life.

Gifts

A gift can have fulfilled its purpose even if you no longer need or want the object.

Appreciating the person doesn't require keeping every item they've given you.

Children's Things

Adult children may want some things and not others.

Give them an opportunity to decide, but that doesn't mean everything you've kept for decades needs to go to them.

When Family Disagrees

The same item can mean very different things to different people. Agree early on who makes the final decision, and give family members a clear date to claim what they'd like.

It's okay to let something go even if someone else feels it should stay.

Photographs and Memorabilia

You don't necessarily need every physical item to preserve the memory. Consider what you genuinely want to keep, what can be photographed or digitized, and what memories can simply remain memories.

Letting go of an object doesn't mean letting go of the memory attached to it.



MOVING

Decluttering Before a Move

The best time to decide what comes with you is before you pack it.

Decluttering isn't only useful when you're staying in your current home. If you're preparing to sell, moving to a different home or considering downsizing, the decisions you make now can make the eventual transition easier.

Think About Your Next Home

If you know where you're going, consider the space, layout, storage and lifestyle it will support. If you don't know yet, think about the kind of home and life you're moving toward.

Ask Before You Pack

Will I have a place for it?

Does it support the way I want to live?

Is it worth paying to pack, move and store it?

Don't Wait Until Moving Week

Trying to make thousands of decisions while packing creates unnecessary pressure. Start earlier, work in manageable pieces and give yourself time for the harder decisions.

> THINKING OF SELLING?
>
> If you're planning to sell, **talk to me** before you start clearing. I can help you decide what's worth doing before photos and showings, and what can wait until you pack.

Related: Should I Stay or Downsize? · Hamilton Downsizing Starter Guide · The 3R Method™ · Room-by-Room Checklists

NEXT DESTINATIONS

What to Do With the Things You're Letting Go

Making the decision is only half the job.

Once you've decided something no longer belongs in your home, give it a destination.

Pass Along

Family, friends or community organizations may have a use for things you no longer need.

If you donate, choose reputable organizations and make sure items are clean, usable and appropriate for donation.

Sell

Selling can make sense for valuable items, but consider the time involved. Photography, listing, communication, negotiating, arranging pickup and dealing with no-shows all have a cost.

Not everything worth something is worth selling.

Recycle or Discard Responsibly

Some items shouldn't go into regular garbage. In Hamilton, the City collects bulk items such as furniture and mattresses on your regular collection day. Book at least a week ahead; up to four items are picked up per booking. Paint, batteries, chemicals and other household hazardous waste go to a City of Hamilton Community Recycling Centre, and electronics can be recycled rather than thrown out. Check current rules and locations at hamilton.ca, or see my Hamilton Home Resources page.

Return expired or unused medications to a pharmacy rather than putting them in the garbage or down the drain.

Papers and Personal Information

Shred anything with personal or financial information rather than putting it in the recycling. Before throwing out tax records or other financial papers, ask your accountant what you need to keep.

Getting Help

You don't have to do it all yourself. Family and friends can help with lifting, sorting or simply keeping you company. For bigger jobs, professional organizers, junk removal services and senior move managers can take on part of the work.

> DON'T CREATE A NEW PILE
>
> A donation pile sitting in your hallway for three months isn't finished. Give the items a destination and move them along.

KEEPING IT UP

When You're Finished

A simpler home is easier to maintain.

Decluttering isn't about reaching some permanent state of perfection. Life continues. Things come into the house. Priorities change.

A few simple habits can help prevent clutter from rebuilding.

Give Things a Home

When everything has somewhere to go, putting things away becomes easier.

Pause Before Buying

Before bringing something home, ask:

Do I need it?
Where will it go?
Will it genuinely improve my life?

Review Occasionally

You don't need another massive decluttering project. A quick review of closets, cupboards, wardrobes or storage areas from time to time can prevent accumulation.

Keep the Standard Realistic

Your home is meant to be lived in. The goal isn't a showroom.

The goal is a home that feels good to live in and manageable to maintain.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

A Different Way to Think About Your Stuff

Your home holds more than things.

Every home contains years of decisions, experiences, relationships and memories.

Some objects still belong in your life. Some have served their purpose. Some may be waiting for a decision you've been putting off.

Decluttering gives you an opportunity to look at those things with fresh eyes. Not with guilt. Not with pressure.



Does this still belong in the life I'm living?
And if the answer is no, that's okay too.

You get to decide what comes with you.

PRINTABLE

Room Checklist

Make a copy for each area you work on.

Room or area: _____ **Date started:** _____

ITEM	KEEP	PASS ALONG	SELL	DECIDE LATER (REVISIT BY)	RECYCLE OR DISCARD	DONE
	☐	☐	☐	☐ _____	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐ _____	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐ _____	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐ _____	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐ _____	☐	☐
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	☐	☐	☐	☐ _____	☐	☐

WHERE IT'S GOING

Working room by room? My Room-by-Room Checklists cover the kitchen, bedrooms, bathrooms, basement, garage and more.

This guide provides general information only and is not legal, financial, tax or mortgage advice. Programs, rules and costs change; confirm details for your situation with the appropriate professionals. Not intended to solicit clients already under contract with a brokerage.



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