

How to avoid clutter

You collect clutter for all sorts of reasons. Perhaps you've been keeping it because you might need it later or for sentimental value, or even because it cost you a bit to purchase. But it's likely that you really don't need it anymore or bought it by mistake.



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Studies have shown that coming to this conclusion hurts you. Yes, really. It hurts your brain: Yale University researchers found the same parts of your brain that light up when you are injured, light up when you try to get rid of things you feel connected with.

Clutter has other effects on your brain, including negatively affecting your ability to focus and process information. Physical clutter decreases productivity and increases stress, and a similar effect occurs when you are constantly pinged by the flow of information, such as email and message notifications.

So what can you do to avoid clutter?

Follow these four basic tips:

1. Limit your consumption. Set constraints on digital items such as how many people you follow on Twitter or how many apps appear on your cellphone. Buy another book only when you've finished the one you're reading. This way, you will no longer be trying desperately to get everything done and you will enjoy what you consume.
2. Decrease your storage space. This is another way that limiting yourself will help you: if you have less place to keep stuff, you'll have to keep less stuff.
3. Review your possessions once a month. Take a look through your wardrobe and throw out stuff you aren't using in the

season. Go through your paperwork, file some away, and discard some. This way you'll also become a master at knowing where everything is.

4. Follow the five-minute rule. If something you need to do will only take five minutes of your time, do it rather than filing it away to do later. If you sort the little things immediately, you'll have more time to work on the big projects.

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