

Does this look familiar?



The Problem:

Having lots of stuff stored can pose some serious hazards, some you can see, some you cannot.

Consider your storage room, living unit, or garage as a box you also have to be inside. As it fills, the volume of the unit decreases. With this decreased volume come some fire hazards:

When a fire ignites, it will heat the space much faster. Smoky conditions will worsen much faster as well. 90 percent of fatalities in home fires are from heat and smoke. In the event of a fire, firefighters will not endanger themselves by entering a cluttered space unless absolutely necessary to rescue a trapped person. Getting in, out and through might be a challenge, even on a good day.

A stored car has gasoline and a battery. Fuel and an ignition source.

Inside your home, extension cords can only be legally used in a temporary fashion (180 days). If anything is stacked upon them, they overheat.

Rodents just love this environment. You may never see them as they burrow in and destroy your belongings. They also love to chew up extension cords and electrical wires. Any fabric-Yummy!



The Solution:

The Five Boxes You Need to Declutter

When getting ready to tackle a large decluttering project, it is very helpful to get FIVE boxes or large bags ready ahead of time. This will help speed up the process dramatically and make your project easier and more fun. Let us begin with the garage. Here is a blog from someone who did this:

“By focusing exclusively on discarding first, we were able to clear up significant space in our garage really quickly. Once we discarded everything that we needed to get out of our garage, we switched our focus to storage & organization. **But we focused on discarding first.** It made a world of difference for us. If we found an item that needed to be moved somewhere else (and there were many!), we didn’t move it right away. We first placed it in the “Re-organize” box but didn’t do anything else. ***To start with, focus exclusively on discarding.***”

The boxes are for items to **1) sell, 2) trash, 3) recycle, 4) donate, and 5) re-organize**. Once your boxes are ready, you can start decluttering your home much more efficiently.



With your five boxes ready, you should also prepare a Task List: decide precisely which areas of your house will be tackled. A task list will help you stay on task! It is too easy to get distracted and do little bits of decluttering all of over the place without really making an impact on one area (which can be highly un-motivating). Think: *RESULTS!*

As much as it sure can seem like it, your stuff is not secretly multiplying overnight. It's all gaining access to your house in one way or another."

Before decluttering, ask yourself this key question to prevent future clutter from invading your life again: "How did I accumulate all of this clutter in the first place?" We are always going to need to get rid of tons of extra stuff until we figure out where it's all coming from and why we are accumulating it. Once you have figured out the answers, you will be in a better position to STOP future clutter." Often you will walk in with your arms full, leave with them empty.

The things you can sell will bring in some impressive money-you will be surprised how much!

Donating helps others and can be a worthy tax deduction. Some organizations will even pick up donations.

Are you Done Discarding? You Are Now Ready for Garage Organization

Do not make the mistake to start with this step to de-clutter your garage. You do not want to buy storage boxes or shelves to organize items that you should discard. Your first step is to discard (see tip number 1). Once you have discarded as many items as possible (Intensively and Completely), you can think about buying specialized garage storage solutions. These solutions will make a huge difference to get your garage organized.

You should come up with a logical storage system to group similar products together. For example, your garage should have different areas to store products for:

- Gardening
- Car & bike maintenance
- Home cleaning
- Sporting goods
- Food
- Clothes and shoes
- Children
- Etc.....



In most garages, you will find old paint buckets, batteries and other toxic materials. You will want to dispose of these products appropriately.

Decluttering your garage is probably going to be a long project. You will be tempted to give up, and it is very important to keep the momentum going. Take before and after pictures (Who doesn't love a good before and after transformation?). Taking before and after pictures of the garage you are decluttering will: **(1)** Make it more fun and exciting to see the makeover. **(2)** Keep you motivated! Show it off-you earned it!!!!

Your living space will be another area you can clear of clutter. You will walk through it with renewed pride and interest every day!!!!

Don't get overwhelmed, it did not fill up in an afternoon, it will not get straightened up in one either!

Grab a pizza, a good friend or two and enjoy the satisfaction of a job well done!

Thank you for making your home a bit safer. Your neighbors will be safer as well.

