

HOW TO DECLUTTER YOUR HOUSE

'Tis the season for spring cleaning, so professional declutterer (yes, they do exist) Vicky Silverthorn is here to give her top tips for simplifying your life

BEDROOM

- ◆ Empty your wardrobe of clothes. Cull what you don't need and give it to charity or friends and family. If you have a bag of items that you are going to pass on to specific people, make sure they pick them up sooner rather than later. You've got to be really firm; otherwise you'll just be moving clutter around the house.
- ◆ Buy skinny hangers so you can fit more clothes in your wardrobe - things such as blouses don't need to go on thick hangers. Some people use wooden hangers, which take up a lot of room.
- ◆ Avoid keeping anything under the bed other than your seasonal wardrobe change. Put one additional item under there and, before you know it, you'll be sleeping on a hoard of randomness.

KITCHEN

- ◆ It's amazing how many people have got their kitchens so upside down. Always organise it to suit the way you use it.
- ◆ Start by creating a tea station. You could place your cups on a shelf above your kettle and if there is a drawer beneath, store your spoons and other cutlery there. We make tea a lot, so keep everything in one place.
- ◆ Pull things out of cupboards and drawers and assess what you actually need. Are those five spatulas essential? Do you need your barbecue tools in the kitchen if you only use them in summer? Why not pack them in a plastic box and store in the shed or garage. Basically, make sure your kitchen isn't a storage space for occasionally used items.
- ◆ If you have room for several pots and pans and you use them a lot, it's

fine to keep them. Decluttering isn't about having as little stuff as possible - it's about having things in the right places and in the right quantity.

LIVING ROOM

- ◆ Be realistic about your DVDs and CDs and think about how often you play them. Could you store your films and music digitally instead? Are they taking up valuable space?
- ◆ If you love books, invest in proper bookshelves so you can enjoy them in your living area. I stack all my books in colour order because it makes a design feature out of them - also, it's another way of not seeing them as clutter, because they become a piece in the room.
- ◆ If you have children, just keep a small number of toys in a box in the living room - encourage children to keep the toys in their bedrooms

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instead. Make it your children's job to take toys back to their bedrooms when they're not playing with them.

- ◆ People love to keep magazines, but have you got the space for them all? If you want to keep a particular article, why not just cut out the page?
- ◆ Leave a small basket at the bottom of the stairs to help declutter your hallway. This basket is also the place to keep things that you use frequently but which would normally belong on another floor - it will save countless trips upstairs.

STUDY

- ◆ Think about how you file your paperwork. If you've got your filing system wrong, you'll end up with papers everywhere. I use a filing system by Ryman called The Bisley 10 Drawer Cabinet - www.ryman.co.uk - you don't need lever-arch files or a hole punch, you just label the drawers appropriately and file your papers as you go. Everything will be in date order, because whatever you put on the top will be the most recent.

BATHROOM

- ◆ People sometimes have five bottles of shampoo, but do they need them? Start using things up, and only buy more when you have run out.
- ◆ Look at what you use. If you have bought stuff that isn't right for you, shampoo for instance, give it to someone who might use it.
- ◆ Go through your make-up bag every few months and clear it out.
- ◆ *Vicky Silverthorn is a professional organiser and declutterer. For more information about her services: www.youneedavicky.com*
- ◆ *Vicky spoke to Melonie Clarke.*

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