

# 10 Steps to Declutter a Huge Storage Area over Time

Overwhelmed with no idea where to start? Don't have a solid month+ to devote to it? Have a big area? Maybe a house? Maybe someone else's house? Don't want to live amidst the mess, time pressure & stress of a huge decluttering job? This is a stress-free process which is intended for the worst jobs that could take months to complete. Some is old; some is new. Start with the first two steps! Jill

## 1. Put These Supplies in the Clutter Room (Work Only One Room at a Time)

- Hefty Ultra Strong Garbage bags, Post-it Notes & Sharpie marker.
- 4' folding table, card table or other workspace. Chair and good lighting.
- Storage bins. Ideally get rid of all boxes, if possible.
- Avery large labels to label bins (LABEL BINS AT THE END).
- Portable shelving units or similar if possible.



## 2. Divide and Conquer

- Visually section off the messy room into small 'zones' that can be **knocked out in an hour**.
- Number each zone with post-it notes # 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 etc somewhere visible in the zone.
- Continue until the whole area is zoned off.
- Yay! You have just carved the clutter into manageable, one-hour bites. The final number estimates the number of hours the decluttering will take + clean-up time. It's ok! Eat an elephant one bite at a time.

## 3. Pick a Zone and Start!

- Pick a zone any zone! Use the worktable to open boxes and review items.
- Touch every item. Decide Keep or Toss.
- Unpack every box including boxes already organized by category. Decide to keep or toss each thing.
  - Don't unpack tax documents already organized by year. Keep up to 7 years.
- Be systematic. Simply process and organize. **Put on music. Enjoy the memories.**
- Be tough. **The object is to reduce the amount of clutter, not reorganize it.**

## 4. Keep, Toss, and Categorize

- Every item should be moved from its current spot and categorized
- Keep:** Use the bins to re-organize into separate categories.
  - One bin minimum for **each person by name** for items assigned to each.
  - Create a new category bin for things **not** assigned to a person.
    - E.g., Bin categories: photos, games, baby, collectible toys, newspapers, sports memorabilia, tech, books, Christmas, wrapping paper, hobby, White Elephant etc).
  - Avoid creating a generic "clothing" bin. Put in the person's personal bin.
  - Special categories: "Quilt"
    - A separate bin or bag for each child's keepsake t-shirts, sweatshirts, jerseys, rally flag, garment and other fabric items to be made into a quilt.
- Toss:** use garbage bags & old boxes to separate garbage, recycle, charity, or sale (online, yard)

## 5. Staging – (Where to Hold Stuff While Decluttering)

- Important! As you go, move items from their current spot to a temporary new spot (staging area).
- Keep:** Stage the bins on the clutter room **floor**. Toss items into the bins by category as you declutter.
- Toss:** Stage garbage bags so they're handy next to table to sort garbage and donations.
  - Move full garbage bags to a nearby spot (e.g., hallway) to hold there until end of the day's work.
- The old messy area will be empty when the area is finished except for bins on the floor.

## 6. During a Declutter Session (A Session is Time Spent in Any One Day)

- Don't fret the pace. Touching everything takes time! **It takes as long as it takes.**
- Fatigue and exhaustion are demotivating & a deterrent to return. Stop when physically or mentally tired.
- ALWAYS clean the staging area outside the clutter room after every declutter session.**

## 7. After EACH Decluttering Session

- Close the door and walk away until next time. Feel great no matter how little or much was done.
- Allow enough time to clean up areas (e.g., hallway) of garbage, donation bags etc.
- Don't stockpile donation bags in the garage. Arrange delivery or pick up asap.
- Bay/Craigs/FB sales: Research & create the listing as you go. Yes, stop. Then stage it & move to garage.
- Garbage and recycle. Move garbage to the garage. Call for special pickups as needed. Use a dumpster only if there is no time restraint or issue with a dumpster sitting at the home for a while.
- Keep sensitive docs, account numbers, bank statements, PII in garbage bags for one trip to a commercial shredder.

## 8. Final Step After Entire Room is Decluttered

- When finished, the shelves/area should be empty. Recategorized full bins are on the floor.
- Dust & clean and then organize the bins back onto the shelves. Label the bins with the category.

## 9. Tips

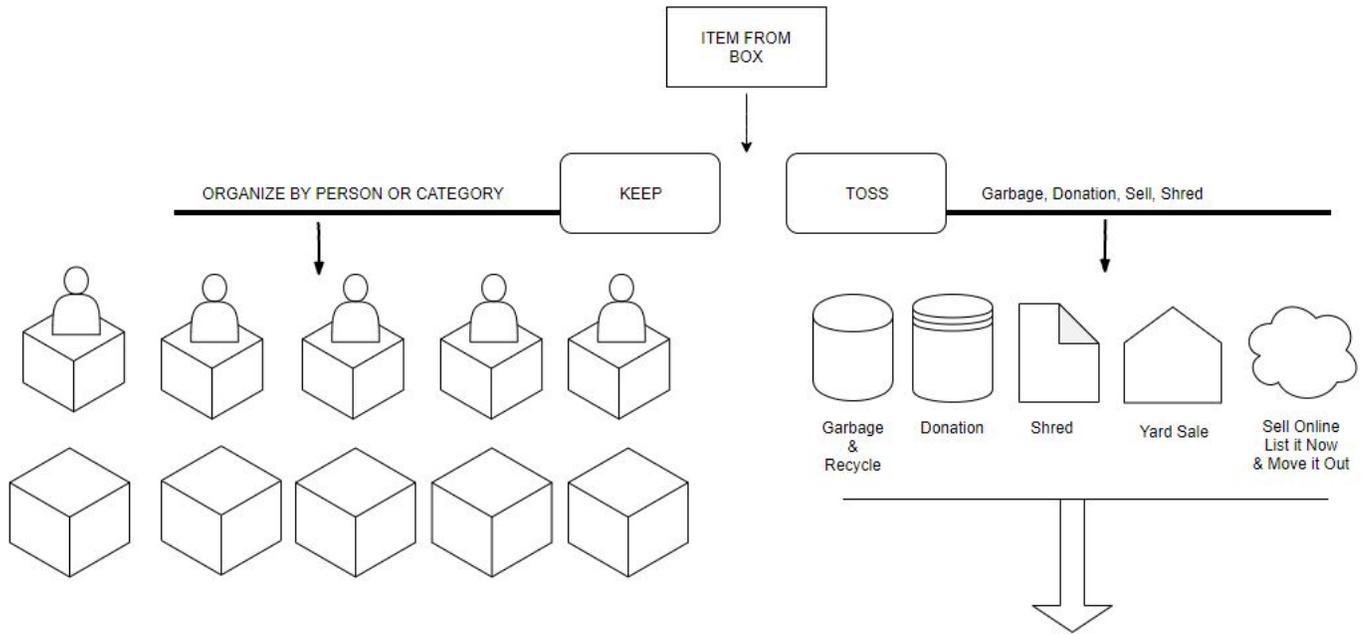
- Use texting to send pictures and ask kids & family members to respond with keep or toss.
- Use a phone to take pictures of sentimental items being tossed instead of keeping
- Photos. Remove from frames. Trash big portrait photos (keep small copy). Keep best pics, not all.
- Cards and letters. Keep treasured family members' personally written notes and stamped envelopes.
- Marie Kondo says keep anything that gives Joy. If it doesn't bring joy, say goodbye.
- Old computers, laptops. Don't donate or resell. Destroy motherboard and dispose.
- Children's artwork & sentimentals. Photograph and toss. Keep a few treasures in their bins.
- Old furniture, lighting, décor, etc. – Sell, donate, or repurpose, but get it out of the clutter zone.
- Try to touch an item only once. Don't set it aside for later. Decide now.

## 10. Congratulations! Celebrate your accomplishment!

- Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Completion Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Would love to hear what helped and your tips. Best wishes, [JillKeogh@gmail.com](mailto:JillKeogh@gmail.com)

For those who process visually...



ALL ITEMS GO TO THE GARAGE AT THE END OF **EVERY** DECLUTTER SESSION

- Garbage - special weekly pickups
- Toxic - call town or county for instructions
- Recycle - with regular recycling
- Donation - charity and give-aways
- Shred - Hold in bags. Take all together to commercial shredder.
- Yard Sale - Hold in garage until sale. Donate all unsold.
- Online Sales - Hold in garage until sold. Unsold: Donate or yard sale.