

Decluttering Decision Guide

A calm decision aid for your home, office or any space that has become harder to use than it needs to be.

1 Before you begin

Do not try to decide the future of your entire home today. Choose one small, clearly bounded area: one drawer, shelf, bag, work surface or category. Set a timer for 15-30 minutes. Your goal is not perfection; it is to make the next decision clearer.

ASK THE FIRST QUESTION

If I did not already own this, would I choose to bring it into my home today?

This shifts the question away from what you paid, who gave it to you or how long it has been there.

ASK THE SECOND QUESTION

Is this item unique? What makes it unique?

If the answer is vague, the uniqueness may be the story rather than the object. Keep the story if it matters - not necessarily every object attached to it.

2 Keep it when most of these are true

☐ **I use it.**

Used within the last 6-12 months, or I am certain I will need it in the coming 6 months.

☐ **It has an important current function.**

It supports daily life, work, health, finances or safety.

☐ **Replacing it would be difficult or costly.**

It is not easily available again, or replacement would take significant money, time or effort.

☐ **It has genuinely unique emotional value.**

It is meaningful and irreplaceable - not simply something I might look at one day.

☐ **It has a real home.**

It fits in a designated place without creating further clutter.

☐ **I have a sensible quantity.**

It is not one of more duplicates than I can reasonably use.

A useful rule: An item does not have to pass every test. But if it has no clear use, no unique value and no realistic place, it is usually taking space from something more useful.

Worth remembering

Letting an object go does not erase the person, effort, memory or intention connected to it. You are allowed to keep what serves your present life - and release what does not.

LETTING GO WITHOUT GUILT

The purpose is not to own as little as possible. It is to make room for the life you live now.

3 Consider letting it go when any of these apply



Unused for over a year.

No specific, realistic plan to use it soon.



I had forgotten it existed.

Finding it changes nothing in my everyday life.



Broken, expired, damaged or incomplete.

I have not repaired or completed it within a reasonable time.



I am keeping it "just in case."

No concrete scenario makes its use realistic.



It is a surplus duplicate.

More than I can reasonably need.



It is easily available elsewhere.

Online, photographed, borrowed, rented or easily bought again.



Guilt is the only reason it remains.

A gift, inheritance, old cost or former hobby is not an obligation.



It costs more energy than it gives.

It requires space, maintenance or organisation without real value.



It belongs to a former version of me.

An old hobby, project or plan that no longer fits my present life.



It limits my usable space.

A clear, functional room has greater value than this object.

4 When you are undecided

Use a perhaps box - one labelled container with a date 3-6 months from now. Keep it out of sight. If you do not look for the item or miss it by that date, let it go without reopening the whole decision.

5 Your next small reset

Choose one area and make the next step concrete.

Area I am clearing

Choose one clearly bounded area.

Example: one drawer, one shelf, my desk.

Time I will spend

Choose a short, realistic session.

Example: 15 minutes after dinner.

What do I want this space to make easier?

Name the function you want the space to support.

Example: getting dressed, preparing breakfast, finding paperwork.

Where will the things I remove go?

Decide the exit route before you begin.

Example: donate, recycle, sell, return.

What will help stop the clutter returning?

Choose one small maintenance action.

Example: reset the surface every Friday.
