

The Clutter Chronicles

Decision Making

Checklist



Thirteen Ways to Know For Sure
What to Toss and What to Keep

The Clutter Chronicles Decision Making Checklist.

13 ways to know when that “thing” is clutter or a keeper...

In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing.

--Theodore Roosevelt

One of the biggest areas of confusion, frustration and procrastination when it comes to removing the clutter from your environment is what *exactly* is clutter and what isn't?

In the process of getting rid of your clutter, there will usually be a pile of things that come under the heading of “*what the heck was I holding onto that thing for?*”

Then there will be those items that you wouldn't part with if there was a gun to your head.

In between will be the stuff that you just can't decide on. This is where many of us get frustrated indecisive and stressed out. Usually, the result being the grinding to a complete halt of your de-clutter project.

The processes can become emotionally charged and overwhelming when the items in question are inherited and or carry some sort of sentimental value.

(The stress can be ratcheted up to almost intolerable levels when you add in siblings and other family members with differing opinions and agendas. There are whole books and lots of info out there about how split up estates so I'm not going to go down that road here.)

This is a cheat sheet for helping you decide what to keep and what to toss when considering the pile of everyday “Stuff” that will naturally accrue in your de-cluttering project.

13 Ways to decide what to keep and what to toss...

The following is a list of questions to ask yourself when you come to an item that fits into the “In between” category. Hold the item in your hand if you can. (If it's a piece of furniture or something large, sit on it or touch it) and ask the following questions. By the time you get to the bottom of the list, (Probably even before that) It will become evident to you what you should do with the item...

- 1) **How long has it been since I've used this item?** – If it's been more 90 days since you've even considered using the thing or, if you are keeping it because of the dreaded “I might need it someday” concept. It's definitely clutter.
- 2) **Is the item still useful or does it contribute in some way to your productivity or environment?**
– Maybe you haven't used it in a while but you will definitely use it in the future. (Golf clubs in

the winter time for instance) Then great, keep it. If it isn't useful to you or does not contribute in any way to your life or environment...Out it goes!

- 3) **Is it broken?** – This one is self-explanatory. You should never hold onto something that is broken. If it can be fixed great! Get busy fixing it and put back into service. If it's beyond repair...Out it goes!
- 4) **Do you have more than one of the same type of item?** – When we got married my wife Jeannie had three cake mixer machines. She only ever used her favorite one. Guess where the other two went?
- 5) **Do you have books, magazines, reports etc. that contain information you could get or keep digitally?** – We live in the information age everybody. If you can't get the information off of the internet you probably don't need it. Sure, keep books if you want them as decoration in your den or if they have sentimental value. Otherwise, Digitize!
- 6) **Does it have sentimental value?** – There are certain things that you will probably want to keep just because they make you happy. That's great, but don't overdo it. (See #4 above) keep one or two of your most favorite snap shots to display, Digitize the rest. Remember that you can keep the memory alive without the sentimental nick knack.
- 7) **Does the item bring you joy.** – We all need artwork and things that bring our space to life. Once again, don't overdo it. A clean clear space with a few high quality pieces of art is much more livable and low stress than one that is crammed with all kinds of stuff just because someone else may think it's "Art"
- 8) **Are you keeping the item out of guilt?** – Did your sister give it to you? Did it belong to your dad? These things are just as much clutter items as anything else. Once again, if it brings you joy and fits in your space, keep it. But, if you don't collect antique hunting knives like you father did, why keep them? It won't diminish his memory or discount the love you shared to sell or donate them.
- 9) **Do you really want to use valuable, limited storage space to keep this item?** – Treat your storage space like gold. It should not be used to hide things you don't want. It should only be used to keep things of value or that you will be using sometime in the near future.
- 10) **Is it in the way?** – Are you having to step around the item or move it from place to place to function in your environment? If so, strongly consider removing it.
- 11) **Will you be tired of it in 3 months?** – If so, get rid of it now! You should have asked yourself this question when purchasing or acquiring the item in the first place.
- 12) **Do you really want to pack it up, then unpack it and store it again next time you move?** – I know you have boxes full of stuff that you moved from your old place and have never even looked inside of since. Sell, donate or trash what is in those boxes.
- 13) **If the item was stolen from you tomorrow, would you spend good money to immediately go out and buy a new one?** – If it isn't worth replacing, why do you have it in the first place? Once again, out it goes!

Print this list and keep it handy when addressing your pile of clutter. Remember to be ruthless with yourself. Most of what's in that pile is probably clutter. If you just can't decide. Here's a little hack you use to makes sure.

Take the item in question and put in storage for 3 months. Put a date on the calendar, on that date stop and consider the item. If you missed it and or found you really have a use for it. Great Keep it. If you really didn't miss it that much or even forgot that you'd stored it. Out it goes...

Good luck and good purging!

Cary David Richards