

# HOMESTYLE

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THE  
ORGANIZATION  
ISSUE

The **7** Day

## Organization Plan

*An hour a day keeps the mess away*



Versatile kitchen storage | Decluttering essentials | The best tech organizers

# Everybody HOARDS

It's called a reality show for a reason. Experts from A&E's "Hoarders" explain the psychological underpinnings of hoarding, and how to curb the urge

By NAZISH DHOLAKIA

CTW Features

Some collect greeting cards in old shoeboxes, while others have makeup drawers with contents that date back to their days in high school. Whether it's expired medications or unread magazines, professional organizers and experts on hoarding say that most people collect some form of clutter.

## Mass Appeal

No wonder the A&E television show "Hoarders" appeals to so many viewers, says Dr. Suzanne Chabaud, who appears on the show. She is also the founder of the Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Institute of Greater New Orleans.

While there is an important line between clinical cases of hoarding (where the clutter significantly disrupts the person's day-to-day life, work or personal relationships) and run-of-the-mill clutter collectors, the show's popularity stems from the fact that viewers can relate to the clinical cases, Chabaud says.

"People realize that there is a little bit of hoarding in most of us. So many aspects of the disorder are present in so many people, but to a much lesser degree," she explains.

## Can't Take the Waste

So why are people naturally reluctant to part with their possessions? Dr. Robin Zasio, director of The Anxiety Treatment Center of Sacramento, Calif., says that people hold on to things because of the extraordinary attachment they can develop for their belongings and the fear that they will forever regret letting them go.

Zasio, a clinical psychologist who also appears on "Hoarders" and recently wrote the book, "The Hoarder in

You: How to Live a Happier, Healthier, Uncluttered Life" (Rodale Books, 2011), says that throwing things away can feel wasteful. She admits that even she has pairs of shoes in her closet that she's never worn and probably never will: "I think, 'I can't get rid of these because I paid money for them.'"

## Great Expectations

For those who plan on tackling the drawer of pens or every nook and cranny of the garage, Chabaud recommends having a specific goal in mind.

"Establishing unrealistic expectations can lead people to feel defeated," she says. "Sometimes people delay because they don't feel like they can do the job well enough in the time that they have."

In these cases, the perfectionist within must be silenced. All too often, people get caught up in a small decision that cripples the decluttering process.

"People procrastinate and find things to do other than the things that challenge us," Zasio says.

Zasio suggests setting aside specific times to declutter, without overdoing the plan. A weekend or a whole day may be too much, so start off by spending an hour or two making decisions about what to keep and what to throw away. Begin with the easier projects, and gradually move on to the more challenging tasks.

## Learning New Habits

Katherine Trezise, professional organizer and president of the Institute for Challenging Disorganization, reminds her clients that while they address the back-log of items they have accumulated, they must also develop new habits and routines to organize the continuous influx of things like mail, books and groceries.

"The root cause of much of our disorganization is that we don't finish what we start. We cook dinner, but we don't put the dishes in the dishwasher. We open the interesting mail and leave the rest lying around," she says. "When you do something, take the next step, or the next couple of steps, and finish it."

## Support Structure

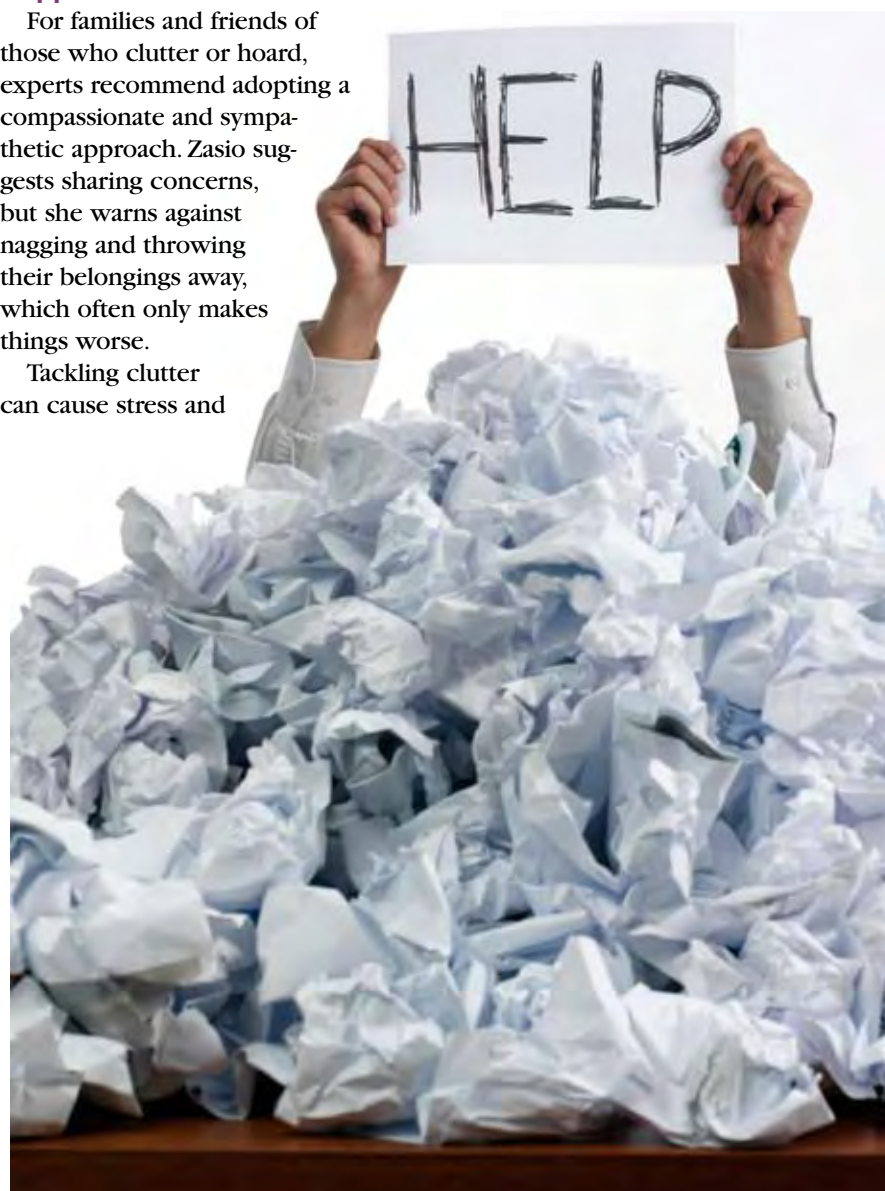
For families and friends of those who clutter or hoard, experts recommend adopting a compassionate and sympathetic approach. Zasio suggests sharing concerns, but she warns against nagging and throwing their belongings away, which often only makes things worse.

Tackling clutter can cause stress and

anxiety, but Zasio says that the anticipatory anxiety – what people think they are going to feel – may be worse than what they actually feel afterward.

And for those who hit a rut along the way, she recommends thinking about the possibilities for the decluttered space, and the feeling of freedom that accompanies accomplishment. Let the decluttering begin.

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# Responsible Recycling

The time to get organized is now – but don't get overeager and sidestep these ethics of decluttering

By BEV BENNETT  
CTW Features

**W**hen unwanted stuff is taking over and you're itching to start tossing, it's tempting to aim straight for the trash can.

Resist the urge. Filling garbage bins should be the last resort, not the first, according to Micaela Preston, a sustainability advocate in Minneapolis, Minn.

"I try to avoid the trash until all other options are gone," says Preston, author of "Practically Green: Your Guide to Ecofriendly Decision-Making" (Betterway Home, 2009).

Alternatives such as selling, donating or recycling belongings can benefit others while avoiding harm to the environment, sustainability proponents say.

Of course, not all possessions have value to someone else; it's not helpful to pass along pillows infested with bedbugs. Decide how to ethically eliminate clutter with a few basic questions.

Ask whether the items can be reused or recycled, or if they are hazardous, says Nathan Engstrom, regional sustainability coordinator at Northland College, Ashland, Wis.

Depending on the answer, find ways to get rid of unwanted goods, Engstrom says.

Business writer Kimberly Palmer has a different approach: "My test is whether I'd give [the discard] to my

younger sister," says Palmer, of Washington, D.C.

If the answer is yes, there is a wide range of opportunities, from selling to donating to creating something new from the discards.

Here are some options:

**Sell or trade:** A local resale or consignment shop may be interested in better-brand clothing, dishes and small appliances that are in good condition. Clothing should be appropriate for the beginning of each sea-



**Secondhand wonders:** Local resale shops may buy clothing that is still in good condition, or try hosting a clothes swap party with friends.

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## Quick tip:

Each community has its own ordinances and guidelines for disposing hazardous and electronic items. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency offers tips on getting electronics out of your home in a responsible way. Visit the EPA website at [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)

son. Check first to see what the store is accepting.

**Host a swap with friends:** Get together a group of like-minded friends and host a clothes-swapping party (or any other tradeable item). Not only is it a trendy idea now, it's a good way to get what you need while whittling down your wardrobe.

**Donate:** Opt for nearby establishments, such as a neighborhood thrift shop, if available. If the local shop isn't taking merchandise, check non-profit organizations, which may be able to redistribute the goods, says Palmer. Used books and magazines can have a second life in a senior center or shelter.

Don't forget to do a little research about the organization. "Look for reviews online to see whether it's legitimate. Get a sense of how they use the items," says Palmer, also author of "Generation Earn" (Ten Speed Press, 2010). Getting a receipt for your donation is a good sign.

**Recycle or repurpose:** It's true that one man's trash is another man's treasure, and the Internet makes it much easier to find that man (or woman, or group). The Freecycle Network ([www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org)) and similar services can help get goods into grateful hands. Preston, for

example, found a taker for a box full of packing materials.

Perhaps unused items can evolve into tools for organizing the home. For example, stitch pockets onto an old towel and add hooks to the top. Add a rod and attach to a wall in the kitchen. Fill the pockets with small kitchen gadgets.

**Lend or borrow:** Community groups are springing up that allow members to lend goods to each other. They can help pare down possessions more than you thought possible. Instead of buying a roasting pan that's only used once a year, borrow it.

**Discard:** Get rid of things that are irrevocably soiled, broken or hazardous, but do so in a way that doesn't damage your surroundings or put anyone at risk, say the experts.

Stained, torn clothing won't be accepted by a resale store, but it has more life to it. Call the local animal shelter to see if they'll take scraps for bedding. Visit the website [www.earth911.com](http://www.earth911.com) to find nearby organizations that accept rags.

Although it's tempting to dump metal discards on the side of the alley for scrap dealers to pick up, most municipalities frown on the practice. Check first.

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# Time to Downsize

**A small space helps people live simpler, greener and more organized lives. Here are some tips on how to downsize**

By **DAN RAFTER**

CTW Features

**S**maller is better. That's how sustainability and design experts seem to see it nowadays.

"When you have less space, you tend to have less stuff," says Sarah Susanka, author of "The Not So Big House" series (Taunton Books) and well-known advocate for small houses.

There's a green element to this small living, too. "You are heating and cooling less square footage. There is a compactness to the way you are living that is more sustainable," she says.

Freelance writer Mimi Zeiger has long been a proponent of simple living. Zeiger has written extensively on



**One man's sparse is another man's simple: Small-home advocates love the lack of excess 'stuff' in their living spaces.**

small homes, most recently in "Micro Green" (Rizzoli, 2011), which extols the virtues of small living. Besides being green, small homes force residents to be better organized. Living small means not collecting too much stuff.

Zeiger had the chance to put her small-living skills to the test early in 2012 when she moved to a 600-square-foot one-bedroom unit in Los Angeles.

"I opened up a box, and I swear I had gotten rid of everything inside it before I left New York," Zeiger says. "It was a box of random items that I thought I had already donated. There's a pair of shoes that I only wear once a year. There's a tote bag from a party I attended. These are

Rizzoli: Mimi Zeiger's "Micro Green"

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random things that fall into your life.”

White Plains, N.Y. resident Karen Lee, editor of the Green Living Ideas website and another fan of small homes, says that living small has forced her and her family to simplify their lives. Lee will donate books that

she’s read instead of stacking them on shelves, and doesn’t collect souvenirs from family vacations. She’ll pass on the latest gadgets and kitchen appliances if she knows that she has nowhere to store these items.

“I have a husband who likes to

throw things out before asking,” Lee says. “The kids don’t want to throw anything out. So we live a constant balancing act.”

While many of the homes featured in small-living books are custom-built for unique situations, anyone can turn a small apartment or house into a versatile and comfortable space.

Susanka is a fan of built-in furniture. For instance, she’ll transform a windowed wall by building storage closets on either side of a window, then installing a window seat with its own storage in between. This creates plenty of storage space without significantly shrinking a room.

“You can’t ever tell that the room has gotten smaller,” she says. “You may have eliminated 10 inches from a room. Your eye barely notices that.”

Staying organized also makes spaces more flexible. In Zeiger’s Brooklyn studio apartment, her office desk doubled as a dining table when guests arrived by simply clearing

away her laptop and papers.

Zeiger also says that walls make small living more difficult. Instead, she uses benches or tables as room dividers to turn one living space into two, creating the illusion of more area. A well-placed area rug can perform the same trick, Zeiger says.

But no matter what tricks homeowners take, having the will to part with even cherished items remains the key to living in a small house.

Susanka gives the example of a family that has long kept grandma’s dining room table even though it takes up an entire room of the house and the family rarely uses it. Susanka recommends holding a final, formal family dinner at the table and then donating the piece.

“Think of it as a rite of passage,” Susanka says. “Letting go is so important. By having a sort of formal goodbye for a piece of furniture, it makes letting it go that much easier.”

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**Some small homes are custom-built for design enthusiasts, but small-living tips can help anyone in a cramped space.**

Rizzoli: Mimi Zeiger's "Micro Green"

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# The 7-Day

An hour a day keeps the mess away. Stay on schedule and your home will stay organized. No stress required



# Organization Plan



By **DAWN KLINGENSMITH**

CTW Features

**Y**ou've got a workout plan and a diet plan for your physical health. But what about your house? An organization plan may be just the answer.

The key to getting started is to keep the tasks reasonable, professional organizers say. Save the big projects for an intensive spring cleaning. Meanwhile, reduce your everyday messes and stresses with a seven-day series of manageable tasks that target problem areas and can be completed in less than an hour.

"Cleaning out an office seems overwhelming, but cleaning out a drawer isn't so intimidating," says certified professional organizer Seana Turner, whose company is based in Darien, Conn. "Go for quick successes when you're first getting started to gain momentum and a sense of accomplishment."

To begin, make sure you have the right tools. You'll need six or seven storage boxes or laundry baskets with labels: trash, recycle, donate, relocate (for items that belong in another part of the house), storage and sell (optional). Each day, use this sorting system to divide and conquer clutter.

You also will need clear plastic bins for storage; a two-drawer file cabinet and folders; slim velvet clothing hangers; and hooks.

Then you're ready to take the one-week challenge, and repeat as necessary. >>





### Day 1: Accounts Manageable

“Use technology to simplify your life,” suggests Monica Ricci, a recurring expert organizer on the HGTV show “Mission: Organization.”

She recommends several web-based and mobile applications, including Manilla.com for household accounts like bills, subscriptions and point-based reward programs; ZipList,

a virtual shopping list and recipe box; and Remember the Milk, an online to-do list and task-management program that syncs to mobile devices.

Most importantly, sign up for cloud-based computer data backup like Carbonite.com.

“It runs in the background, scanning your computer for new material, and automatically backs it up. You don’t need to remember to do it,” Ricci says, “so it’s one less thing to worry about.”

Tech-based organizers eliminate paperwork and make it easier to find and sort information, which saves a lot of time. A computer is searchable,

while a file cabinet is not.

### Day 2: News You Can Use

By definition, a bulletin is a summary of news or current events. Yet kitchen and home office bulletin boards tend to become burial sites for paperwork and repositories of ancient history.

Take down all the notifications, schedules, schoolwork, lists and clippings and toss everything that’s out-of-date or expired. Relocate papers to their proper places if you wish to file them for future reference or save them as keepsakes, Turner says. Only items pertaining to current or upcoming events belong on a bulletin board.

### Day 3: Stack Attack

Do a 60-minute paper purge, starting on surfaces and in drawers where printed materials accumulate. Many printed materials are readily available

online, including user manuals, take-out menus, recipes, catalogs, magazines and reference books. In a 15-minute blitz, dispose of papers and books that are accessible online.

Spend the remaining 45 minutes dismantling as many stacks as you can. “Paper is hot, warm or cold. Hot papers require prompt action, like bills and RSVPs,” says productivity consultant Sara Caputo, founder of Radiant Organizing in Santa Barbara, Calif.

Use an inbox, wall pocket or bulletin board for hot papers, and file or dispose of them as they are dealt with.

Warm papers are documents used periodically, such as bank statements and health records. They belong in a two-drawer file cabinet.

Cold papers are files that are rarely needed but can’t be thrown away, such as tax returns, Caputo says. They

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can be boxed, labeled and stored in the attic, basement or on a high shelf.

#### Day 4: Bathroom Blitz

Expired medicines and cosmetics not only cause unnecessary clutter, they pose safety risks. “Cleaning out the medicine cabinet is a quick, easy, high-reward project,” Turner says, because you can tell at a glance which medicines are expired. Empty everything out, sort the discards from the keepers and wipe down the cabinet inside and out before putting things back.

Time permitting, consider replacing the towel rack with a row of hooks. “Children in particular don’t do well with towel racks. They’ll use hooks so much sooner,” Turner says.

Hooks decrease the likelihood of a heap of damp towels on the floor and make it easier to remember whose towel belongs to whom.

#### Day 5: Wardrobe Reality Check

“Your closet is neither a hope chest nor a museum. If you haven’t fit into a size 6 for years, donate those clothes to someone who will actually use them,” Caputo says, adding that if you slim down, you’ll probably want fresher fashions anyway.

Without overthinking, do a quick wardrobe purge, parting ways with clothing that is worn out, dated or unflattering. Transfer the clothes to the slim anti-slip velvet hangers, which hog less closet space than thicker plastic hangers.

Caputo has a trick to deal with the “maybes” that are just too hard to get rid of: Hold on to them for now. The point of this exercise is to make quick and easy decisions, not tough ones. Hang all the hangers backward, with the hook facing outward. Switch the hanger to its proper position (hook facing inward) after an item of clothing is worn. In six months to a year, evaluate the items you haven’t worn and start paring down more decisively.

#### Day 6: Cups Runneth Over

“Cups and mugs somehow just automatically multiply,” says Ricci, founder of Catalyst Organizing Solutions in

Atlanta. Pull out all the drinkware and organize it by type: juice glasses, plastic tumblers, water bottles, travel mugs. Downsize the collection to avoid precarious stacking.

#### Day 7: Reverse Santa

Start rotating toys to minimize clutter and keep children’s interest piqued. When children are away, gather the toys they haven’t played with in a while and put them in the basement or attic.

Unless they ask about specific toys, in which case you can give them back, wait a few weeks or months to reintroduce the purloined playthings and take away others. Younger kids will think they’ve gotten new toys with each rotation, Caputo says.

If your kids are older, give them a bin and a monetary incentive to get rid of clothing, books, toys and games they no longer use. A payout of a quarter per item should be sufficient, Caputo says.

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## Stick to It!

Resolving to de-clutter and organize your home is one thing. Sticking with a seven-day program is another. Success depends on “your to-do list meeting your calendar,” says productivity coach Sara Caputo.

Block out a specific time for each hour-long task. “You need to decide on a time frame and mark it down on your calendar or everything else is going to gobble up that time,” Caputo says.

At the designated time, set a timer for one hour. Knowing there’s a finite period of work time makes a task seem easier to tackle. A timer – especially one that actually ticks – also acts as a “focusing tool,” helping you block out distractions and work more efficiently, Caputo says.

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# Too Much Stuff



**Everyone's guilty of keeping a few pairs of too-small jeans or unread magazines. Clear that clutter with a three-pronged approach**

By **COURTENAY EDELHART**  
CTW Features

**I**t's easy to procrastinate on decluttering. Sorting and organizing may ease the mess, but a color-coordinated bookshelf of junk is still a bookshelf of junk.

The decluttering process forces people to edit down their possessions, choose what's really necessary and get rid of the rest.

It sounds daunting, but don't get overwhelmed, says Jeffrey Phillip, New York City organizer and designer.

"Even if it's a ton of stuff, you can work through it if you break it down into smaller pieces," says Phillip, who appears on nationally syndicated "Better TV." "Just make up your mind that I'm going to start here. Here might be just one table. I'm going to clear off this table. But that's a start."

Stick to a three-pronged approach to tackle clutter from every angle.

### Stopping Stuff at the Door

Don't beat yourself up about impulse purchases. Stores are designed to lure customers into such buys.

With that said, there are strategies for stopping the accumulation of junk before it starts.

When shopping for specific items, make a list and stick to it, Phillip says. For even better control, bring only enough money for the items on the shopping list.

Before buying something, consider why the purchase is necessary, says Joshua Zerkel, San Francisco-based certified professional organizer and owner of Custom Living Solutions.

"Are you putting too much value on it because you need it for self esteem?" he asks. "Or are you getting it because you're bored or in a bad mood and you're shopping just to shop? Is it really, truly something you don't already have, something you need?"

Also, set up "road blocks" at home so it's obvious when things get out of hand. For instance, to keep magazines from piling up, put them in a basket or bowl. When it's overflowing, it's time to

purge, says Christopher Lowell, a designer, author and television personality.

### Making a Plan

Zerkel suggests beginning “with the place that’s driving you the most crazy,” and then rotating around the room clockwise.

“If you say you’re going to do the whole house, it’s hard to see progress at first, and you might get discouraged and give up. If you focus on one place, there’s immediate gratification. You feel better, and you keep going,” he says.

For larger projects, divide everything into piles, Zerkel says. One pile each for things to

keep, things to throw away, things to recycle and another for things to donate.

Do research ahead of time on the ultimate destination for everything, Zerkel adds. Otherwise, it’s easy to get stuck midway through the process, unsure where to take unwanted things. That also deters last-minute surprises and getting stuck with a pile that was sup-

posed to be banished from the house.

It’d be a shame to do all the sorting and then discover, too late, that the landfill won’t accept toxic chemicals – or that the dog-chewed chair won’t be gone from the curb for weeks because the monthly heavy trash pick-up day already passed.

Research the pick-up schedules and rules for trash disposal from the

local solid waste management division. Environmental groups are usually well-versed on who will take items for recycling and how much can be diverted from landfills. Metal recyclers often will take large appliances and even cars for free or a nominal fee, for instance.

Social service organizations and houses of worship usually know places in need of donated clothes, furniture and household goods.



**Cut the clutter:** Stay away from impulse buys to keep the home free of useless objects; be prepared to sort through everything and know where it will go; and be painfully honest about what to keep and what to toss.

### Getting Picky

Resist the trap of buying bins for junk that really ought to go, Lowell says.

“That’s what people want to do, hide it all in decorative containers and create your own landfill.”

Better to face the music and make

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## Quick tip:

Whatever your system is for organizing belongings and keeping clutter at bay, make sure your family or roommate understands the system and is on board with it. Otherwise, you won't be able to maintain it, and there will be unnecessary strife in the household.

tough choices.

"Do I really need seven spatulas when I only use two, and am I ever going to wake up with the body of a 12-year-old and fit in these clothes again?" Lowell says.

Decide what to pitch and what to keep by "ransacking" the house mentally, he says. Go through it with a fresh eye and realistically assess what is used and what isn't.

Then ransack the place again, for real this time.

Be merciless with anything that's damaged. "If it's chipped or broken, throw it away. Thanks to the global economy, you can usually get a brand new set of something you really love for a fourth of the price of fixing it," Lowell says.

Think of storage areas and the rooms of the home like real estate, he added. Your most expensive real estate - eye-level cabinets and drawers that are easy to reach - should be reserved for daily-use items. Higher cabinets and places that are harder to

get to should contain things used only occasionally.

Seasonal items should go in remote locations such as basements, attics and garages.

If it's never used, it needs to go.

"Be honest with yourself," Lowell says. "If you can't remember the last time you needed it, you probably won't need it again."

The willpower, research and physical task of moving it all will take time and energy, but in the end it is well worth the effort, Phillip says.

"I really think that people want to pare down right now," he says. "We're constantly inundated with so much information and so much stuff that we're yearning for simplicity. And once you clear out your physical space, your mind clears, too."

"It really lifts your spirits and relieves a lot of stress when you're not overwhelmed and having to step over things to get anywhere."

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# The PERILS of Collecting Clutter

Chronic clutter can lead to amusing revelations for visitors. Joel Dovev, author of “Crap At My Parents’ House,” spun it into a book deal

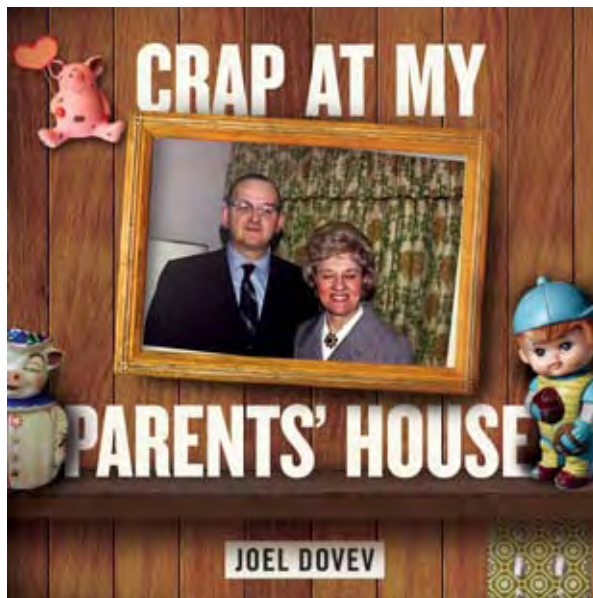
By **BETTINA CHANG**  
CTW Features

Imagine cruising the Internet and suddenly finding a photo of your home décor on a stranger’s website. It could happen, especially if your kids poke fun at those creepy Christmas figurines or that stuffed deer head in the kitchen – that’s what “Crap At My Parents’ House” (Abrams Image, 2011) is all about.

Joel Dovev, comedy writer and author of the blog and book, got the idea when he found a bottle of kosher wine in his mother’s basement freezer and a replica pirate ship on her mantle. The blog was launched shortly thereafter, in 2010.

Since then, readers have submitted thousands of their own photos of parents’ quirky homes, and Dovev consistently dishes out humorous commentary on each post.

“Sometimes it’s just the way a doll looks,” Dovev says of the photos he chooses to feature on the blog. “[The reader] sent me this doll that kind of looked like Ron Paul. I created a ‘Grumpy Dolls that Look Like Ron



Paul for Ron Paul’ flier and posted it.”

We caught up with Dovev, 29 and now living in New York, to chat about the ramifications of clutter and how his blog about found “crap” has helped propel him to fame.

**Q:** What separates blog-worthy crap from just plain crap?

It’s whatever I can write something funny about. Sometimes I’ll have no idea what to say about it for a year – and then it strikes me later. Sometimes it’s immediately funny, like a

stuffed deer head with sunglasses – it gets picked up right away.

**Q:** Since that first blog post, have you featured more of your mom’s home décor?

Every time I go home, I put on those glasses and look for interesting things. Originally, my mom didn’t like the idea of me taking pictures of things inside her private home, with the sole purpose of distributing it across the Internet. But now she’s super excited about it. She’ll even tell me about things that I might find funny – like, “Look Joel, over there, there’s a bottle of Ajax with sunglasses on!”

**Q:** Have you ever purged clutter at your own house?

People say things like, “Real nice, making fun of your parents! What about your house?” To be honest, I’ve always been infatuated with weird stuff. I collect a lot of things, like a Jean-Claude Van Damme poster or commemorative Coca-Cola bottles.

I moved in July and realized I had so much stuff that I didn’t need. I threw away or donated 12 bags of clothes and purged everything that I

didn’t have an emotional connection to.

**Q:** Why do you think it’s hard for people to get rid of stuff?

Most people keep stuff around them because there’s either a purpose or emotional connection. You might keep a weird creepy doll that could be the spawn of Lucifer to most people, but your grandmother gave it to you in the ’30s.

**Q:** Besides a lot of laughs, what other feedback have you gotten about the blog?

People who are dealing with their own parents’ passing or moving out of a home have submitted a lot of cool stuff. Seeing the site as therapeutic to them. When either their parents pass or their health is deteriorating, they need to clear out a house where their parents have lived for 50 years. They decide what stays and what goes.

It’s hard for the kids, no matter how old they are. When they see this site, they can have a laugh. It’s a horrible dilemma, but seeing the site makes the situation lighter.

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# No More Chaotic Kitchen

Kitchens are the family's hub of activity. Get it organized to keep life from grinding to a halt

By **JEFF SCHNAUFER**  
CTW Features

If the kitchen is the most-used room in the house, doesn't it make sense that it should be the most organized? Yet many kitchens exist in an organizational no man's land, where a mish-mash of storage functions often create more questions than answers: such as, "Hey, where's the can opener?"

If there's a key to making kitchens more organized, it may come in one word: versatility.

In the book "The Organized Kitchen" (Adams Media, 2012), Clarence, N.Y.-based author Brette



Sember writes that organizing a kitchen can save time, money and sanity. "I like storage that can be versatile," she says. That means storage should accommodate all the big and little things found in the kitchen – from tiny teaspoons to a jumbo-sized wok. It should adapt to the ever-changing needs of the family that uses it.

KraftMaid, a custom cabinet company based in Ann Arbor, Mich., recently commissioned a study focused on generational differences in kitchen use that found some common themes.

"We found that homeowners want more storage in a clean design style," says Sarah Reep, the company's director of design relation and education.

Consumers are also affected by the

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economy. “Families have been cutting back budgets for dining out, which makes the kitchen more important than it has ever been,” Reep says. “And because I think consumers will be staying in their homes, they’re actually going to be looking at remodeling so they can stay comfortable.”

Increasingly, people are looking for pragmatic storage solutions that are accessible, safe and aesthetically pleasing.

### **Pulling Off Pull-Outs**

Across the board, experts recommend pull-out cabinets for spaces big and small, high and low.

Sember recommends slim pull-out cabinets that save space but can hold kitchen necessities. “This kind of storage space works for spices, medications, cooking oils, vinegars, flavored salts, honey and much more,” she says.

Alison Victoria, interior designer

and host of DIY Network’s “Kitchen Crashers,” agrees. The pull-out construction makes it easier to reach items stored at the back of the cabinet. “Pull-out spice drawers are essential for any kitchen,” Victoria adds. “I was so sick of trying to dig and find things in my upper cabinets and this was a quick fix.”

She also favors roll-out shelves, as well as replacing “the common lower cabinets with large pull-out drawers for easy access for large pots, pans and cooking sheets.”

Reep says that KraftMaid’s tiered pan-and-lid storage pullout is popular for keeping the bulky items organized and easy to retrieve.

“It’s very tidy,” Reep says. “Sometimes kitchens aren’t really large and using your space vertically is a way to use more of the cabinet effectively.”

### **Get Attached**

It helps to condense a kitchen by

choosing storage products that attach and fit easily together. Sember suggests using in-drawer butcher blocks or butcher blocks that attach to the side of a cabinet to keep parts of the counter space stashed away.

She also recommends baskets/containers that clip onto the front of pantry shelf and glass food storage containers designed to fit together or stack. The former adds storage space while the latter discourages precarious stacking that could lead to an even bigger mess.

Another smart solution is to use food storage containers designed to hold specific things like cupcakes and deviled eggs, Sember says. These will keep these foods from getting damaged when someone tries to cram a few extra Lunchables in the



**Hidden kitchen: In-drawer butcher blocks provide more counter space without taking up room.**

KraftMaid

fridge. Customized food storage has gotten steadily more popular in recent years, both for its usefulness and typically colorful presentation.

### **All In the Family**

If the kitchen is the hub of family

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activity, then it must accommodate the needs of everyone in the family, including the young and the old.

“When it comes to elderly clients, I make sure that everything is at arm’s length,” Victoria says. “Locating all essential appliances in a seamless layout is what matters most. Center islands for prep with the sink and fridge on the left and right with the stove behind is ideal.”

Sember also cautions against using upper cabinet shelves. “This may mean bringing in an additional freestanding cabinet. The lowest shelves of bottom cabinets are also problematic, so installing

pull-out drawers there can help,” she says.

As for appliances, Victoria recommends side-by-side refrigerators with water and ice dispensers, “so [the clients] aren’t bending over to find the things they need.”

For children, Sember says, “the first consideration is safety. The second consideration is making a kitchen child-friendly with the addition of a box of children’s cookware, step-stool and child-appropriate cooking activities.”

Safetyproofing all cabinets and making sure cutlery and any other dangerous utensils are out of reach is essential, Victoria adds.

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While achieving the perfectly organized kitchen might take some heavy investment, Brette Sember, author of “The Organized Kitchen,” (Adams Media, 2012) says that “the key is not to spring for the latest, greatest organizational products.”

Instead, Sember says, “look for cheap ways to organize that are not so highly specialized. You can do an awful lot with drawer dividers, metal standing shelves added to existing shelves and plastic organizer boxes.”

DIY enthusiasts can repurpose things like kitchen towel racks on the back of doors to hold pot lids and baking sheets stacked on top of glassware for additional shelving.

## Some Cheap Tweaks

Another low-cost solution is a pot rack, but it’s not for everyone, warns Alison Victoria of DIY Network’s “Kitchen Crashers.” She says, “Make sure your kitchen space is open and airy, and that your cooktop is not directly below the pot rack.”

As for hard-to-reach areas, “There is no better solution for a corner cabinet than a lazy susan,” says Charlotte, N.C.-based cabinet design consultant Dara Barber. “There are tons of other pull-out tray systems on the market, but I feel like there is so much mechanism involved that it just gets in the way of the storage. Who wants two



extra steps to pull out their storage when you can just push through the lazy susan and find what you need?”

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# DOING Double-Duty

**Multipurpose furniture saves space and money while staying stylish for the modern home**



**Stowed away:** Storage beds for master bedrooms are gaining popularity as floor plans shrink and designers create stylish pieces.

**By COURTENAY EDELHART**

CTW Features

**F**urniture pieces that serve more than one function have been around a long time, but they've become more popular since the economic downturn.

"Consumers are a lot more sensitive about making smart choices with their money," says Lisa Engel, vice president of product development at ClosetMaid, a home-storage company based in Ocala, Fla. "They want a lot more value out of each piece they buy, so they buy combination pieces."

Hence, more ottomans with interior storage, beds with bookshelves and drawers, and shelves that double as computer desks. ClosetMaid is among the many companies trying to capitalize on the demand for multi-

purpose furniture like stackable cubes and cabinets that provide both storage and shelf space and benches with storage underneath.

The need for such products is partly a function of how people live. Everyone can't have enormous mansions with room for a dedicated gift-wrapping room. More likely, rooms with limited space have to serve more than one purpose.

People are asking designers to accommodate these needs while staying stylish, says Melissa Salamoff, a Burbank, Calif.-based interior designer. Recently, she designed a combination guest bedroom, office and lounge area.

Combining all those uses in the same room is especially challenging when rooms are small, as is the case

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in older homes. Plus, some newer homes shrink secondary rooms to make way for open-concept great rooms. Children’s bedrooms, in particular, tend to be tight, Salamoff says.

Her solution is multipurpose furniture that is vertical to conserve precious floor space, preferably in colors close to those of the wall behind it, to create a feeling of openness.

But it isn’t just secondary rooms that can pull double-duty.

Kitchen islands can double as craft areas or contain pullout shelves and drawers for a computer workspace. There are even kitchen tables with spots to tuck away napkins and placemats.

Really, no place is sacred. An office can even be shoved in a closet, says Sayeh Pezeshki, of The Office Stylist, a Los Angeles design and consulting firm.

Mobile lifestyles mean that more

people are investing in laptops, so desk space can be smaller and more versatile. Any shelf or counter will serve, and some wall-mounted desks on hinges can fold up and out of the way when not in use, Pezeshki says.

To maximize a home’s potential, take a tour of it with fresh eyes to get an idea where the deficiencies are, says Jeff Alan Gard, a San Francisco architect and custom furniture designer.

“Go to what you have now and think about what it does and what you wish it would do and then see if you can find something that accomplishes that in the marketplace,” he says.

“If you can’t find anything, you can always make it yourself or have it custom-made... there’s always a solution.”

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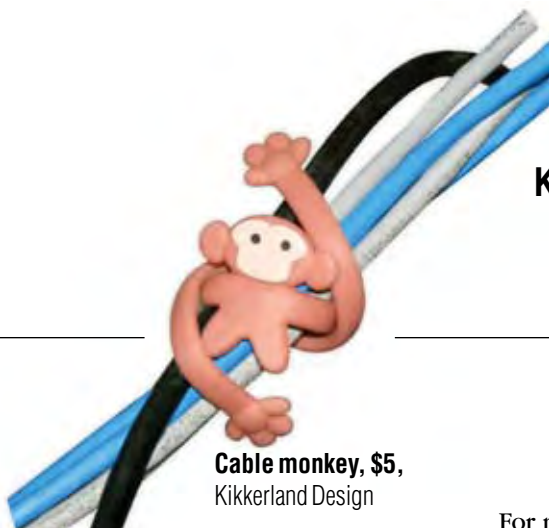
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# Tech Geek to Clean Freak

Keep all your gear in order with these fun tech organizers



**Cable monkey, \$5,**  
Kikkerland Design

By **SERENA DAI**  
CTW Features

Got a lot of gadgets? Keeping up with new technology can create a knotty mess of wires and chargers in a home office. Luckily, the compulsively clean techie has fun, stylish options to organize it all.

Families with a lot of mobile devices to charge may like the Belkin Conserve valet, a USB charging station. It charges up to four USB devices, hides the cords and automatically turns off when the batteries are full.

For non-USB friendly products, try the Bluelounge Sanctuary - it's compatible with almost 4,000 devices. The sophisticated design comes in three colors and can be found at computer or home design stores.

Loose cables that fall off desks can be cleaned up with Cordies, which have rubber grips to keep wires organized. Cordies, a product of Quirky.com, a site that helps inventors produce their ideas, is sold at office and home design stores. It comes in several colors and materials to match any techie's tastes.

Minimize cable tangle with fun cable ties. Kikkerland Design makes

them in the shape of monkeys, crocodiles and dachshunds - great for the tech-savvy teen's room. They can be found at many specialty shops. Nature lovers may like the New York Museum of Modern Art's leaf cable tie, designed to make cables look like wrapped twigs.

Hide cable clusters with the Bluelounge CableBox Mini, sold at computer or home design stores. The box holds surge protectors, and with six bright colors to choose from, it adds flavor and pop to a room.

High-powered tech means clunky chargers - something standard surge protectors may not accommodate. Techies can simplify with the Pivot Power surge protector, another Quirky.com product sold at office and home design stores. It fits up to six large chargers and can twist around furniture, great for saving space under the desk.

Extra devices mean a need for more USB ports, but extra ports don't have to look boring or messy. The Museum of Modern Art (NY) store offers a pale green hub with four plugs that looks like a string of peas. Kikkerland Design, offered at many specialty gift or home shops, makes a red tulip garden with a USB plug in each of its four flowers.



**Pivot Power, \$29.99**  
Jake Zien (Quirky.com)



**USB Flower Hub, \$12**  
Kikkerland Design



**Cordies, \$9.99,**  
Stephen Stewart (Quirky.com)



**CableBox Mini, \$29.95**  
Bluelounge

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