



DECLUTTERING with Volunteer Editor: Jeanette Wojcik  
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Do you have a junk drawer in your kitchen? I just looked in mine. There were 2 pens that no longer write. I've got string from a bakery box. (Are there bakeries that still use string around the box?) I found a couple batteries and have no idea if they work. There were post-it notes and paper clips. I found rubber bands that no longer stretch. There's a book of matches, a screw driver, scotch tape and masking tape. Now the drawer is decluttered and organized. That's the topic for this month.

Decluttering can be overwhelming. There are lots of articles on how to declutter and what to keep, but the decision to toss something can be really personal. What works for one person won't be right for another. [Melissa Locker](#) with AARP suggests that you start with the trash. We all know what she means – the pens that don't write, the rubber bands that don't stretch, etc. She recommends starting with a small area (that kitchen junk drawer) or part of a room. Chiana Dickson with [Homes & Gardens](#) has identified forty of the top decluttering methods in an article published last year. She begins with a few tips on cleaning out and staying on top of the clutter to more detailed techniques to encourage minimalism. She even includes tips on ways procrastinators can get started and ways to avoid decluttering regret.

If any of us could afford a professional organizer they would be tossing a lot of stuff that we tend to keep. [House Beautiful](#) ran an article that recommends cleaning out the pantry, refrigerator and freezer every January. Toss expired food. Donate food that hasn't reached the expiration date and that you will never use to your local food pantry. Clean out all those cords for phones and appliances that you no longer own. Toss plastic food containers that are damaged or that have no lids. When you are putting away the Christmas decorations, toss any that are broken, worn, dirty or otherwise damaged. They also recommend tossing take-out food containers, condiments and flatware. (Does your church often have congregational meals and if so, can they use these?) How many packets of soy sauce from our favorite Chinese restaurant do we need?

Decluttering for the sake of decluttering is good. It will reduce all the stuff that your children and nieces and nephews will need to sort through when you die. If you are starting the decluttering project because you are downsizing, there are other topics you need to consider according to [This Old House](#) who offers an online [Comprehensive Guide to Downsizing](#). Take measurements of your new place. What can you reasonably put into that space? Be creative with your new storage. Don't buy anything new until you know exactly where it will go in your new space.

What do you do with all the stuff you don't want? You can sell it at a local flea market or online. You can donate it to a museum if it is an antique or collectable. You can gift it to one of your children, a niece or nephew. You can donate to the [Salvation Army](#), [cold weather shelter](#), [St. Vincent de Paul Society](#), [Appalachian Outreach](#), or a variety of other local charities. If a church or other nonprofit is having a yard sale you can ask if they are interested in some of your items. So often what we have is still usable to someone. [Before you donate items](#) that you no longer want make sure they are clean and in good condition. Call the organization to make sure they want what you have and to find out how to make the donation. Don't just drop things off at the doorstep! Keep in mind that you most likely won't be able to donate firearms, used personal care items, baby and children's items that have been recalled or alcohol and tobacco.

These cold, snowy days in the Ohio Valley are a perfect time to declutter our homes. Good luck!