



# Get It Done!

We're here to lighten the ultimate mental load: those "you know you should" tasks that weigh down your to-do list and your mind. We start with Marie Kondo sharing how to clear out paper clutter at work. Then—if you have a little more time at home than you're used to—why not tackle your medicine cabinets, lint vent, and so much more?





# Clean Your Paper Clutter for Good

WITH A TO-DO THIS DAUNTING, WE WENT STRAIGHT TO THE GURUS:

MARIE KONDO AND SCOTT SONENSHEIN, WHOSE NEW BOOK,  
*JOY AT WORK*, HELPS YOU TIDY YOUR WORK SPACE (AT HOME,  
IN THE OFFICE, ON THE ROAD) FOR REAL THIS TIME.



## Put Paper in Its Place

The general rule for papers is to discard everything. My clients always look dumbfounded when I say this. Of course, I don't mean that we should eliminate papers entirely. I'm just trying to get across how much resolve we need in order to choose only those that are absolutely necessary and to discard the rest. Sheets of paper seem so slim; we often hang on to them without really thinking. The more papers we accumulate, the more time it takes to find particular documents, and the harder they are to put in order.

Start by gathering all your papers together in one spot and looking at each one. Even papers that are in envelopes should be taken out and checked page by page in case advertising leaflets or other unwanted material is mixed in with them.

It can be helpful to sort papers into categories while you are skimming through the content. This makes filing them when you're done quicker and easier. Papers can be broadly divided into three categories: pending, save because you have to, and save because you want to.

The pending category includes papers that need some kind of action, such as outstanding bills. I recommend storing all of them in one upright filing box until you've dealt with them. That way they won't become jumbled up with papers in other categories.

Next, let's look at papers we're required to save. Sort them by category and file them in a cabinet or in folders on a shelf. If you don't need to keep the originals, you can scan them and store them electronically. In this case, rather than scanning them as you sort, it's more efficient to put them in a "to-be-scanned-later" pile and do the scanning all in one go.

The last category is papers you want to save for other reasons. These might include documents you want to keep as a reference or ones that actually spark joy for you. But because rebound is a common problem when people hang on to things "just because," keep in mind that the basic rule for papers is to discard them all.

In my tidying lessons, when a client has trouble deciding which papers to keep and which to discard, I fire off questions about each one—things like "When do you need this?" "How long have you had it?" "How often do you go back and look at it?" "Can you find the same content on the internet?" "Have you already saved it on your computer?" "How much of a problem would it be if you didn't have this?" and "Does it really spark joy?" If you balk at the premise that you should discard them all, try imagining that I have just walked into your office and announced that I'm going to shred all your papers. What would you do? Which ones would you scramble to save from the shredder?

## How to Store Papers So You Never Rebound

**As long as you follow my three rules of storage, you'll never return to paper clutter.**

**RULE 1: CATEGORIZE EVERY PAPER DOWN TO THE LAST SHEET.** Start by sorting your papers into clear categories, such as presentations, project proposals, reports, and invoices. Use whatever system works best for you. Now is the time to categorize your papers in a way that makes your life easier.

**RULE 2: STORE YOUR PAPERS UPRIGHT.** For optimal efficiency, it's crucial to store papers in a hanging-file system. Put each category of papers in a separate folder and store them in a filing cabinet or upright in a filing box placed on a shelf. Storing them this way makes it easy for you to see how many papers you have. It also looks neat and tidy.

**RULE 3: MAKE A PENDING BOX.** Keep only those papers that you need to deal with that day. When you've processed pending papers, discard those that don't need to be kept.

Once you have sorted your papers and decided where each category belongs, look at your work space and determine the maximum amount of space you have available for storing them. When you exceed this storage capacity, papers will begin to overflow. That's a signal that you need to reexamine what's there. By checking regularly like this, you can keep your papers tidy at all times.

## Testimonials

### I TOOK A SCANNER APP TO MY PILES

"After 15 years in one place, my husband, daughter, and I recently moved. Confronting all the paper I'd amassed was brutal, until I realized I had room for a scanner in my back pocket! Since getting the TurboScan app (free; iOS and Android), I've snapped copies of important docs and accessed them easily. (I forwarded a refinance affidavit from the bleachers at my kid's hockey game.) And I finally felt empowered to shred reams of random documents—after a quick scan, just in case."

**RORY EVANS, REAL SIMPLE  
EXECUTIVE EDITOR**

### THIS IS WHAT I DO WITH MY KIDS' ARTWORK

"I save the best and recycle the rest. I display the pieces I save as much as possible. There's a drawing my child drew at age 5 (nine years ago!) that still hangs on the inside of my closet door, where I can see it every day."

**JENNA HELWIG,  
REAL SIMPLE  
FOOD DIRECTOR**



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## Corral Your Book Collection

A best seller you hoped to read someday, a how-to book about accounting you bought to improve your skills, a book received from a client...what kinds of books do you have in your work space?

Books are filled with valuable knowledge that can help us do our jobs. When kept at our desks or on our bookshelves, they can give us inspiration or a sense of security. Reading them can boost our motivation, and just displaying them can add a personal touch to our space. In reality, however, we often keep books at work for the wrong reasons.

One of my clients had a bookcase in her office filled with unread books. When we counted them, there were over 50, and more than half had been sitting on the shelf for two years or more. "I'll read as many as I can during my next vacation," she declared. When we met again, however, I wasn't surprised to hear that she had given up partway through. Most of the books that she had managed to read were her most recent purchases. "To leave them unread seemed such a waste that I decided to speed-read to get through them," she said.

"But I began to feel like I was just doing it out of a sense of duty. It wasn't bringing me any joy. This seemed even more of a waste, so I decided to let a lot of them go." In the end, she decided to keep only a carefully selected 15 in her office.

When tidying up your books, begin by gathering them all in one spot. Perhaps you're thinking it would be better to just choose them by looking at the titles while they're still in your bookcase, but please don't skip this step. Books that have stayed too long on the shelf have become part of the scenery. Your mind doesn't register them, even when they are directly in your line of sight, and that makes it hard to decide which ones spark joy. Only by taking each one in your hands can you actually see them as separate entities.

If you find it hard to judge whether or not a particular book sparks joy, try asking yourself certain questions. For example, when did you buy it? How many times have you read it? Do you want to read it again?

Another question to ask yourself is what role that book plays in your life. Books that spark joy are those that motivate and energize you when you read and reread them, those that make you happy just knowing they're there, those that bring you up to date on the latest information, and those that help you perform your work better, such as manuals.

One last question to ask is whether you would still buy that book now if you saw it in a bookstore or if it has passed its prime in terms of your interest in it. Just because you paid for them doesn't mean that you must finish reading every book.

The purpose of asking such questions isn't to force yourself to mindlessly purge your books. Rather, it's to help you explore your relationship with each one you possess. If books spark joy for you, then the correct choice is to keep as many as you want with confidence.

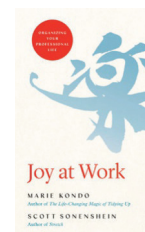
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### Testimonials

#### HOW I CAN BEAR TO PART WITH FAVORITE BOOKS

"In anticipation of a kitchen renovation, I had to seriously trim down my cookbook collection for space—and ended up getting rid of 100 books. I was sad to see them go, but I felt better remembering the delicious recipes I'd made from them and knowing that someone else would soon have the same pleasure."

MELANIE MANNARINO,  
REAL SIMPLE  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR



#### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Marie Kondo is the author of the international best seller *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up* and the star of *Tidying Up* with Marie Kondo on Netflix. Scott Sonenshein is a professor at Rice University and the best-selling author of *Stretch*.





## GET YOUR REAL ID

Starting October 1, when you go to board a plane (even for domestic travel), TSA checkpoints will require you to present a Real ID, a state-issued card or driver's license that meets enhanced security requirements (if you don't have one, you'll need to show your passport or another acceptable form of ID). Don't delay in getting yours; only an estimated 34 percent of driver's license holders have upgraded to a Real ID, and—in a time of social distancing and avoiding any kind of waiting in line—the easiest way to get it done is to make an advance appointment at your local DMV if possible. Time slots fill up fast, but see if your state can notify you when entries open up...then make a reservation ASAP. (Even if your appointment is four weeks out, it's more efficient than just dropping by.) Gather and bring your essential documents (usually a passport, social security card, and proof of address, but check your state's DMV website). For faster services, see if your state lets you submit your documents online, which means they won't have to be scanned and saved during your in-person appointment.

—Rachel Sylvester



## Refresh Your Medicine Cabinet

If you don't purge every six months, you may ingest or slather on products that have lost effectiveness or even expired, says Julie Bestry, a certified professional organizer in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Pull everything out, clean the interiors with disinfecting spray, and put "forever supplies" (things that don't go bad, like your thermometer, first aid kit, tweezers, floss, and cotton balls) back. Then check the expiration date on the remaining items. (Can't find it? See our list below.) If you don't remember how long ago you bought or opened something, or if you notice a change in texture or odor, toss it.

- Contact lens cases and opened eye drops: 3 months
- Anti-aging creams (face, eyes): 3 months to 1 year
- Liquid makeup: 3 months to 1 year
- Powder makeup: 1 to 2 years
- Nail polish: 1 year

- Insect repellent: 1½ to 3 years
- Sunscreen, body lotion, and moisturizer: 3 years
- Hydrogen peroxide: 3 years, or 6 months after opening
- Medications and contact lenses: These should have an expiration date. Keep looking!

To dispose of medications: Drop off unused or expired meds at a "take back" facility registered with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. To find a facility, type "drug disposal near me" into Google Maps (double-check with the facility before heading there), or call the DEA at 800-882-9539. You can also dispose of most pills and liquids in the trash: Mix them with cat litter or coffee grounds in a sealed bag first. Just check [fda.gov](http://fda.gov) to make sure it's safe to toss your particular medication this way.

—Leslie Corona





## Make an Emergency Prep Kit

Worldwide pandemics and extreme weather events—floods, storms, and fires—are a sad fact of life these days, which is why every household should have a “ready” kit. Here are the essentials to have on hand, whether you are stuck at home, are without power, or need to evacuate, says Lea Crager, director of the Ready campaign at FEMA. Wrap these items in airtight plastic bags and store them in a few plastic containers or duffel bags (whatever you find easiest to carry).

For a budget-friendly approach, snap a photo of this list and buy a few items each time you shop.



Here's a  
game plan to  
gather these  
over time.

### NONPERISHABLE FOOD

**Plan for several days' worth for each member of the household.**

- Water (one gallon per person per day)
- Grains (crackers, oatmeal, multigrain cereals, granola or energy bars)
- Proteins (canned tuna, chicken, salmon, or turkey; nut butters; protein bars; canned legumes; canned soups or chili)
- Canned vegetables (green beans, carrots, peas)
- Canned or dried fruits (apricots, raisins)
- Powdered milk
- Baby formula
- Pet food

### TOOLS

**Store any rarely used spares with your emergency supplies now.**

- Manual can opener
- Flashlight
- Radio (battery or hand-crank)
- Batteries
- Cellphone chargers and charged backup battery
- Whistle (to signal for help)
- Wrench or pliers (to turn utilities on or off)

### MEDICAL & SANITATION SUPPLIES

- Toilet paper and paper towels
- Paper plates and utensils
- Moist towelettes and garbage bags (for personal sanitation)

- Diapers, baby wipes, and feminine supplies
- Nonlatex gloves
- Dust mask
- First aid kit (bandages, gauze and tape, antibiotic ointment, pain relievers, antidiarrhea medicine, antacids, laxatives, thermometer, tweezers, diaper rash cream)
- Prescription medication (several days' worth)

### CLOTHING & COMFORTS

- One change of clothes per person, including sturdy walking shoes
- One warm blanket or sleeping bag per person
- Books, games, puzzles, and other family activities

### CASH & KEY

### DOCUMENTS

**These prepare you for an evacuation—and any insurance or FEMA aid claims you'll need to file later. Scan and save key docs to the cloud, and carry copies in a water-proof container.**

- Cash (about \$300 in small bills)—to cover gas or a hotel
- Photo ID or birth certificate for each person
- Bank account records (ideally showing proof of mortgage payments)
- Medical insurance cards, hard copies of prescriptions, medical records, and physician contact info
- Pet ID tags and immunization records
- Copies of insurance documents (renter or homeowner)

—Stephanie Sisco





## Freeze Your Credit

It's come to this: Since 2013, even trusted companies such as Target, Equifax, and Capital One have announced massive data breaches, in which hackers gained access to the sensitive personal info of up to 147 million Americans. If that makes you worried (and rightfully so) about identity theft, experts say placing a freeze on your credit is your best option. "It helps prevent credit cards, loans, and services like cellphones from being approved in your name without your consent," says Eva Velasquez, president and CEO of the Identity Theft Resource Center. In fact, to help deter identity theft, Congress passed a law in 2018 that makes a credit freeze free for you and your kids. (Since children under 16 are prime targets for identity theft—there were 1 million cases in 2019—experts urge you to freeze their credit.)

To request a freeze, call the three reporting agencies (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion) or visit their websites. You'll need to provide documents, such as your driver's license and social security card. The downside: You have to "thaw" the freeze anytime you need a credit check, like when you buy a car, apply for a loan, or sign a lease. When you freeze your credit, save your PIN, which is required to thaw (and then reinstate) the credit freeze. After the request, it takes up to two hours for the thaw to go into effect. —Brandi Broxson



## CLEAN THE DRYER

Not to scare you, but dryers start 2,900 fires each year, due to a buildup of lint inside the ventilation ductwork. To clean it, unplug the dryer (turn off the gas valve if it's gas powered). Carefully move the dryer away from the wall and disconnect the vent pipe from the back of the dryer—you may need to remove a duct clamp or duct tape. Clear away lint with an extendable dryer vent pipe brush (available at home-goods stores). Move the brush back and forth in a circular motion (it feels like snaking a bathroom drain to unclog it) through the detached vent pipe, wall piping, and dryer opening. If possible, remove the vent cover on the outside of your home and clean from that direction.

—Katie Holdefehr



## RECYCLE OLD APPLIANCES

If you have an old countertop appliance (or two or three) cluttering your cupboard or closet, dispose of it responsibly and take back your storage space. Anything with a cord or battery doesn't belong in curbside recycling. To find out where to bring it, visit [earth911.com](http://earth911.com), click "Where to Recycle" in the top bar, and enter your item type and zip code. The listings often include municipal programs, secondhand stores, and big-box stores (like Best Buy) that accept outdated appliances.

—Stephanie Sisco

