



Keep Your Home Clean, Green and Clutter-Free with These Tips

When you're committed to an eco-friendly lifestyle, decluttering is a hard pill to swallow. You want a tidier, more organized home, but you don't want to throw away piles of stuff to achieve it. Thankfully, it is possible to reduce the mess in your home and shrink your environmental impact. Here's how to do it.

Tips for Cleaning

Before you start decluttering, you'll want to arm yourself with supplies for cleaning as you go. Many conventional household cleaners release high levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs). VOCs are toxic chemicals that harm human health, especially in children. You can [learn more](#) about VOCs from the Environmental Protection Agency.

You can reduce VOCs in your home by opting for non-toxic [cleaning products](#) or making your own with all-natural products such as vinegar and baking soda. However, VOCs aren't the only thing irritating your health at home. Carpeting traps allergens including dust mites, pet dander and mold spores, so it's important to vacuum regularly to protect your family's health. A quality upright vacuum with an HEPA filter makes it easy to stay on top of the vacuuming, and most [upright models](#) have height adjustments so you can use them on carpeting and hard floors alike.

Another way to make your cleaning more eco-friendly is by replacing disposable products with reusable alternatives. Swap your Swiffer for a washable mop, choose bar soaps instead of plastic-packaged liquids and gels, and replace paper towels with [microfiber cloths](#) that trap dust and grime.

Tips for Decluttering

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As much as you want decluttering to be over ASAP, avoid sending everything to the landfill. Not only will your items remain in the landfill long after you're gone, but some items are hazardous to the environment when thrown away. These include large appliances, electronics, household chemicals and medications.

To keep your stuff out of the landfill, donate items in good condition so someone else can use them. Appliances, furniture, recreational equipment, linens, dishware, and clothing are all great candidates for thrift store donation. You can even donate well-loved items if you're creative about it: Old bedding and towels can be used at animal shelters, building supplies and paints [donated](#) to a Habitat for Humanity ReStore, and partially used cleaners given to a neighbor in need. If your items are broken or otherwise unusable, recycle through approved channels such as [e-waste recycling](#) programs, prescription drug take-backs and [large appliance](#) recycling programs.

Tips for Organizing

Once your stuff is pared down to the essentials, it's time to organize it for tidiness and functionality. Store everyday items where they're used most often: If you're using an item in the bathroom but storing it in the hallway, you're only increasing the odds it gets left on the bathroom counter instead of returned to its place. If you don't have enough storage, use This Old House's [ideas](#) for adding storage where you need it most.

When it comes to paperwork, photographs and [sentimental clutter](#), take a digital approach to organization. Instead of storing these items in filing cabinets, photo albums and shoeboxes, scan them to create digital versions that can be stored [in the cloud](#) instead. Digitizing documents and photographs not only keeps them safe and accessible, it also prevents them from degrading over time.

We're all guilty of letting messes accumulate from time to time. Thankfully, cleaning them up doesn't have to mean hauling stuff to the dump or using harsh cleaning products that are bad for the Earth and your health. Use these tips to get started on your next decluttering project and you'll be rewarded with a cleaner, greener home now and into the future.

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