

Klutter Kontrol

by Theresa Crabtree

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Klutter Kontrol

Is your home or office a wreck? Do you need help figuring out where to start? Look no further, this easy guide will help get you on your feet and organized, if you are prepared to expend some effort and self-discipline. If either of those aren't your strong points, then either hire a professional organizer to get you started or enlist the aid of a friend to help keep you motivated.

GETTING STARTED

Believe it or not, this is the hardest step. Try your best not to become overwhelmed by focusing on the whole task at hand. Instead start simply and take one step at a time. The entire project may take a year, but that is nothing compared to the amount of time it took to create this Kaos.

Are all the flat surfaces in your house covered with stuff? Take time to sort through the piles, one at a time, finding new places to file or store them. Then discipline yourself to keep things in their place. You will save a tremendous amount of time and energy if you don't have to constantly search for your important papers, keys, wallet and purse. (I am still recovering from spending half of my childhood seeking my mother's eyeglasses and misplaced items.)

Stick with one project until it is completed. If you think of other projects or things to do, write a reminder on a post-it sticky note, then return to the task you were working on. At the end of the day, stick the notes onto a dry erase board or area designated for reminders.

Let's get started by creating a set of rules that you can live by. Post them in a prominent place and set the intention to follow through. These rules are not steadfast. Create what you think you can accomplish and modify as needed.

For example, in the first run, you may decide to donate or sell any clothes that you haven't worn in ten years. On your second run, you are likely to be able to let go of items you haven't worn in five years. On the third run, you might look more closely at your clothes and decide to keep only those that make you feel good and that you enjoy wearing.

It is common to discover that the more you give away or sell, the easier it becomes to let go of other items you no longer need. So, set your rules and modify them as you go along. Here are some suggestions.

- If it is broken, throw it away, recycle it or set aside a place for unfinished projects. (Later, you can choose what to do with the unfinished projects.)
- I haven't used this item in ___ years; it is time to find it a new home.
- I haven't worn this in _____ years, adios muchacho.
- How does this item make me feel? (If it is a positive feeling and you enjoy or use the item, keep it. If there are negative emotions associated with it, consider healing the bad memory or removing the item. This is a basic principle of feng shui. By replacing negative energy with positive energy, you will increase the healthiness of your sacred spaces.)
- I never even liked this item, maybe _____ would enjoy it.
- I do not enjoy polishing this silver or brass. Time for it to leave the class.

SEA OF PAPER

Papers! Papers! Help, I am drowning in the Sea of Paper!

One common denominator amongst all Klutter Kritters is the Sea of Paper. Staying afloat can be an overwhelming task, especially if left undammed for several years. It is going to take one stroke at a time to get those papers under control. But, don't despair; no one has drowned in the Sea of Paper, although many have injured themselves by slipping on them. Here are some suggestions.

Step One: Prevent yourself from becoming overwhelmed. Take it one step at a time. If getting started is too hard, consider enlisting the help of a friend or hiring someone. Even a local teenager can help with the initial sorting.

Step Two: Gather several boxes, scrap paper, markers, pens, hanging files and/or folders with labels and a place to store your paper files, preferably in a filing cabinet or bins. Label the boxes by taping a piece of paper on the outside. Make it big enough so you can rename the boxes several times. For example, on the first sort, you may want to label a box "household bills." On the second sort, you will be separating the bills, so you will need several boxes or files labeled "electric bill, water bill, garbage, mortgage, etc." On the third sort, you will be separating by year.

Sort Number One

Like begets like, match the similar items to each other.

Create a separate space for magazines, newspapers, newsletters, periodicals, church bulletins and flyers.

Label a box “Household Bills” (electric, water, phone, gas, insurance, home repairs, mortgage, internet, cable, etc.)

Do the same for any other types of papers you have, such as: tax receipts, purchase receipts, owner’s manuals and warranties, medical papers, homework and seminar notes, insurance, automobile (insurance, repairs, claims), coupons, hobbies, special interests, projects and banking.

Gather all your contact information in one place: business cards, address book, notes with contact info, etc.

Sort Number Two

Before starting, consider what type of filing system you want to use. If you are using files, have the files, labels and pens nearby. If you expect to pay any taxes, you might want to create a file for the current year labeled “20__ Taxes” where you can easily file receipts as they come in.

You might also consider using stacking or wall bins to store papers until you are ready to file them. Train yourself to file bills as you pay them. Have a separate file for each: “electric,” “insurance,” “pet care,” etc.

Now you are ready to “fine tune” your initial sort. Select one of the boxes or piles and begin resorting.

RECEIPTS

Have a place where you can keep receipts for groceries, inexpensive and expendable items. Purge them once a month when you know you won’t be returning the items.

Sort the receipts you want to keep by type (tools, health care), year or project (kitchen remodel) and keep in a file, staple them together or store in a labeled envelope.

MEDICAL PAPERS

Decide the best way to file them: by year, incident, doctor, procedure... then do it.

PUBLICATIONS

If there is just one article you are interested in, consider cutting out the article, filing it, and recycling the rest of the magazine.

This is not the time to get distracted reading articles. Set aside the publications you are not ready to release. Place the unsorted magazines in one area, and choose a few to sort in your favorite reading spots: the toilet, bedside, coffeetable. If 6 months to a year go by and you still haven't looked through the magazine, consider finding it a new home.

Once they are sorted, store the items you know you want to keep on a shelf or a box labeled "publications to keep." For the items you want to go through again, either put them in a box labeled "publications to sort later" or set aside an area where you can go through them at a later date.

If you are ready to let them go, add them to the garage sale pile, donate to an art teacher at a local elementary school, or recycle them. If they are collectibles, browse the phone book for local buyers or sell them on online.

On your "to do" list, make a note to cancel any subscriptions to publications you don't have time to read on a regular basis.

HOUSEHOLD BILLS

On the first sort, separate each type of bill into a separate pile, such as electric bills in one pile and water bills in another. Next you will need to decide which bills you want to keep.

For example, if you have several years of electric bills, you may decide to only keep the last 12 months or those from the current year. You can then either throw away or recycle the ones you don't want or create a separate pile for the bills from past years.

You may want to organize the bills you keep by date and staple the entire year of bills together. In your filing cabinet, keep only the ones from the current year and file all the others in a marked box or envelope and store out of the way.

TAX PAPERS

Legally, for income tax purposes, you need to keep receipts for three years. However, you may want to save them up to seven years. Store each year's tax papers together in a labeled box or envelope. Create a file near your desk where you can easily store the current year's tax papers.

COUPONS

Set up a filing system and keep them all in one place, perhaps a pouch that can be closed so they don't scatter when you are shopping. Sort them by expiration date or genre: groceries, tools, diners, etc.

OWNER'S MANUALS / WARRANTIES

As you sort through the owner's manuals/warranties, recycle the ones for items you no longer own. If you plan to sell or donate an item that you have the manual for, attach it to the item. Find a place to store the rest in one place for easy access.

INSURANCE PAPERS

If you have more than one insurance company, set up a file for each. If you have old bills that you don't expect to need again, either trash them or store them somewhere other than in the filing cabinet near your desk. For car and home insurance, you will want to keep a file for the initial policy and all the updates you receive. At the end of the year, purge any unnecessary papers.

AUTOMOBILES RECORDS

It's always a good idea to keep receipts on any major repairs to your auto for your personal use and to show the next owner.

Keep your original registration and title in a safe place. They can be expensive to replace. Legally, you must carry a copy of your car registration when driving that vehicle. It is better to carry it on your person rather than leaving it in the car. Remember to carry proof of insurance with you, too. Never leave your title or a copy in the vehicle; it is a sure-fire way to make it easier for a car thief to resell your property.

Also, keep your license tag number in your automobile file and your wallet; it may come in handy when you call the police if someone nabs your vehicle or car tag. Car thieves like to steal license plate tags for the purpose of using them on stolen vehicles. It happened to me twice!

For filing purposes, use a hanging file for each of your autos, labeled with the year and model (2013 Prius). Then use separate labeled folders to keep the auto insurance, another for records (title, deed, bill of sale) and another one for repair receipts.

BANKING

Keep a separate file for each of your accounts. Keep your checkbook in a safe place, out of sight. There are countless stories of checks and credit cards that were stolen by housecleaners, handymen, guests and home invaders.

Set up a “to be filed” space and regularly take time to put them away. Get in the habit of filing your papers as soon as you are finished with them. Find yourself on “hold” while making a phone call? File away while you wait!

There, you did it! You are no longer drowning in the Sea of Paper! Congratulations! Now set the resolve to stay afloat.

MAIL

File mail as soon as it arrives: immediate attention, bills to pay, coupons, to do later, etc. Stop unsolicited junk mail and catalogs by contacting the company directly. There are also direct marketing and consumer reporting agencies where you can write to stop unsolicited mail. Do a search online for current information.

REST OF THE MESS

Let’s take a stroll throughout your property and see where the problem areas lie.

OUTSIDE ENTRYWAY

This area sets the tone for your visitors. Remove any clutter, keep it swept and attractive looking. Does it need painting? Are the windows clean? Does the doorbell work? Create a space that says, “You are welcome here.”

INSIDE ENTRYWAY

This is another area where you want to make a good impression. If you don’t want people to wear shoes in the house, have clean footies or slippers by the door with a chair nearby for your guests to sit on while removing and putting on their shoes.

If there is no natural lighting, use white or brightly painted walls, paintings or lighting. Remove any clutter and items that are not necessary. By your front door is not a good place to keep your purse, wallet, money, keys, jewelry or other easily snatched items.

LIVING ROOM

Have a place for your videos, books and magazines. Do a quick read of the titles and pull out any that you are not likely to watch, read or listen to. Check local thrift stores for bookshelves and storage units to store the rest.

Have seating that allows for comfortable chit-chatting. Every other month, rotate old magazines that have been replaced by new ones. Get into the six month rule, if you haven't read it by then, you likely never will. Let it go.

Throughout the home, keep your windows and sills clean. Open the windows and blinds to let in natural sunlight and fresh air. Keep loose papers to a minimum, preferably stored in the office.

LINEN CLOSET

If the linen closet has a solid door, keep the door slightly ajar. Invest in slatted shelving that allows airflow, to help prevent mildew and musty smells. Remove unused, soiled and torn items. Prepping them to sell or put in the rag pile.

Store sets of bed linens inside the matching pillow case. Rotate linens, towels and washrags by placing the freshly laundered ones on the bottom of the pile. If there is room, store bed linens in the room where they will be used.

BATHROOMS

If the toilet is your library, set up a space for reading materials where you and others won't trip on them. Make an inventory of your medicine cabinet, disposing out-dated medications. Take a peak through your drawers and cabinets to see if there are items you haven't used in two years or more.

Have a space near the toilet where you can reach a fresh roll of toilet paper. You might want to keep some matches handy to lessen the embarrassment of guests who need to do "number two" while others are waiting in line.

Keep scented toiletries to a minimum, especially if you notice you sneeze a lot or have a mild headache during or after taking a shower. Most personal care products are extremely toxic and can cause havoc on one's health. You can read several articles that I have written on the dangers of these products by going to:

<http://t-a-d-a.com/CosmeticsBodyCare.html>

DINING ROOM

Is your dining room table the repository for tons of paper, stuff and mail? Find a place for everything and discipline yourself to put things away each day.

Do you have a china cabinet or shelves overstuffed with china and knick knacks? Consider down-sizing so that you can notice and enjoy the items you truly love. If you can't let go of the items, consider rotating your treasures. Store some of the overabundance in a box and every few months replace them with your other treasures.

Discard chipped and worn items. What are you saving those "special dishes" for? Aren't you special enough to use them? Maybe it's time to find a new home for "grandma's china," the set that no one ever uses, even for special occasions. Before you do, check and see if anyone in the family wants them first.

KITCHEN

If your kitchen cabinets are bulging, start small, perhaps with the junk drawer. How many twist ties, straws and fast food condiments can you let go of? Do you have gadgets that you never use? What about those "time-saving" devices that you never take time to use? If you haven't used them in two years, you likely never will. Gather them up for the garage sale, consignment store or local thrift shop.

Match lids to storage containers then recycle or trash the leftovers. Scrutinize your pots, dinnerware and drinking glasses and pack up the items you haven't used for two years or more. If you find anything that needs repairs, send it to the "repair later" pile.

Organize your pantry and food cabinets so that you can easily tell when you are running low on your favorites. Consider a dry erase magnetic board or notepad on your 'fridge where you can note items to buy on your next grocery store run.

Create a list of food, cleaning and laundry supplies, and other perishables such as toilet paper. Keep the original list, update and make copies as necessary. I keep mine in a computer file and edit as needed. This list makes it easy to note what needs replenished.

For ideas, see the sample shopping list on page 26 or go through your pantry, cabinets, garage and household, listing all the things you will likely need to replace every six months or less.

Keep your newly organized kitchen clean by wiping up spills when they happen and putting things in their place when you are finished with them.

BEDROOMS

Get in the habit of making your bed soon after arising. There are several advantages to doing this. First, it starts your day with a sense of accomplishment. It also makes the room tidier and you will be less likely to lose items in the sheets.

The closets are an area that may seem too scary to deal with. If they are over-packed, take it slow, either working with one genre (sorting shoes, pants or linens) or one area, such as one shelf or section at a time.

Set your initial rules for clothing, such as, find a new home for anything you haven't worn in over five years. Consider storing the rarely used or out-of-season items in the harder to reach places of the closet.

Sort your clothes by type for easier selections. For instance, have all the sleeveless garments together, then short sleeves, then long sleeves. You may want to hang your dressy outfits or work clothes together. Consider hanging your clothes hangers all in the same direction. If space is an issue, buy hangers that have a hook where you can vertically hang your clothes.

Check out the shoe collection and discard those you don't wear or are worn out. Again, go with the rule "I haven't worn these in _____ years; shoo the shoes."

Sort through your drawers, one at a time. Match your socks and discard or relegate to the rag bag the ones whose mate was eaten by the washing machine or stolen by ornery elves.

Got jammies that you haven't worn in eons? Say bye-bye. Got that special set for the "perfect moment?" If that moment hasn't arrived in the past two years, consider recognizing how special each moment is and wear them!

OFFICE

Your bedroom is a place to rest; too much clutter and reminders of things that need to be done can wreak havoc on your sense of peace and sleep time. It is good to have your office in another room; most electronic devices emit harmful EMFs, so near the bed where you spend the largest amount of your time is not the best place to have computers, cell phones and wireless and electronic devices.

A good filing system is the best investment of time for the office area. Training yourself to keep things filed is well worth the effort. Keep current files and those you access often near your desk. Store all others in boxes or envelopes that are well labeled in an out of the way place.

A filing cabinet is an ideal place to keep your current papers. Often you can buy used ones at thrift stores. Place your files in labeled hanging file folders and subdivide in individual file folders. Be sure you can easily read the labels. Colored tabs look nice, but blue, red and green are often hard to read.

Have a space to sort and file incoming mail. Stackable and wall mounted bins can help remind you to take care of business without cluttering your work space. Have bins set up for future filing, then take time to file before they overflow. If you spend a lot of time on the phone, file as you chat or are on hold.

A corkboard, dry erase board and/or calendar can help keep you organized, especially for remembering important dates and deadlines.

At the beginning of the year, on a calendar in red ink mark birthdays, holidays and other important dates you don't want to forget. You may want to write a reminder to buy a card, gift or make preparations on the calendar well ahead of the date. I note things to do on my calendar in pencil, so they can easily be moved to another date in case I don't get to them right away.

Have a place to store desk items such as pens, paperclips, rubber bands, etc. Drawer organizers can be very helpful in keeping often used items nearby and easy to find.

At the end of the day, put everything away and clear off your desk. This will create a feeling of accomplishment and promote a more peaceful state of being the next time you return to your desk.

AUTOMOBILES

The interior of your car can be a reflection of your inner self. Daily, remove trash and objects you don't use. Place rarely used items out of sight or in the trunk. Don't leave expensive items or purses in sight; it may be too much of a temptation for a thief. Repairing broken locks and windows can be a nuisance and expensive way to learn a lesson.

If you are heading somewhere and plan to leave your purse in the car, place it in the trunk before arriving at your destination. Would-be thugs may be lurking for opportunities, especially in mall parking lots. I keep a cooler in the back seat of my auto where I store my purse on these occasions.

GARAGE / SHED

A place for everything and everything in its place is the rule of thumb for these areas. This tends to be the “catch-all” area for all that stuff you are likely not to use. Gather the unwanted items together and give to friends, charity or plan a garage sale. Consider having a party and inviting your friends to take what they want.

If you have an attic, consider putting plywood between the rafters and storing seasonal and rarely used items out of the way. Browse your local hardware stores for storage ideas.

Organize your garage into zones: tools, cleaning supplies and whatever projects you are involved in. Sort your screws, bolts, nails, etc. in clear bins so that you can easily find what you need for a project. Whenever you spend too much time seeking something, that is a clue that you need to set up a special space for that item.

Check your local waste management company to find out the proper disposal method for toxic substances such as pesticides, paint cans, aerosols and oil.

Often you can find used cabinets and shelving to help keep your clutter under kontrol. Garage sales, thrift stores, craigslist.com and www.freecycle.org are places to find bargains. Craigslist.com, ebay.com and freecycle.org are also places to sell or give away your treasures.

THE YARD

Got stuff? Discard what you are not using and organize what you plan to keep. If you have outdoor areas where you store things and want to keep the grass and weeds from taking over, consider putting down an old carpet or rug. Avoid using toxic herbicides and pesticides.

Mowing, trimming and sweeping are the most efficient ways to keep your yard looking tidy. Less clutter makes this job less toilsome. Save wear and tear on your lawn mower blade by doing a walk through first, picking up rocks, debris and limbs. You may be amazed at the distance and damage these projectiles can make when put into motion by a mower or weed eater.

One cheap way to keep your outdoor items together is to build shelves from discarded boards and concrete blocks. Often you can find damaged ones for sale at hardware stores. You may notice some laying in other people’s yards who may be more than happy to give them to you. Craigslist.com and freecycle.org are two other resources.

Nifty little fenced in areas can easily be created with discarded wood pallets and wire. Check the back of retail stores and next to garbage bins for discards. Be sure to ask the owner's permission before rummaging through their garbage; it is illegal.

Once the home and yard are under control, start working on the "unfinished projects" pile. By now, you may have realized you already replaced the broken objects or that you don't need them. If so, let them go.

RULES TO LIVE BY

Start small.

Simplify.

Use it or lose it.

Create your set of rules and implement them.

Finish one project before starting the next.

Designate areas for stuff to sell, stuff to give away and stuff to repair.

Create a place for everything and discipline yourself to place objects back in their designated spot.

Keep paperwork under control by having a filing system for things to file right away and bins for those to file later.

Do a little every day.

Enlist the aid of friends when you need support.

Say “no” when offered items you don’t need or want.

HOSTING A GARAGE SALE

Garage sales are not for sissies. Keep in mind that you will be moving all of your stuff at least twice during the sale. Expect to spend most of your time on your feet, so wear comfy and supportive shoes. You may need to arise much earlier than usual and pack up when you are already bone tired. If your sale is on a hot or cold day, the weather can be unbearable after a few hours.

There are no steadfast rules when it comes to hosting a garage sale. Use the suggestions below that seem pertinent to you and your unique set of circumstances.

Check your local government for rules and regulations. Many cities require a permit and limit the number of sales you can have in a year.

CHOOSING THE DATE

Typically, Saturday is the busiest garage sale day. On Saturdays, many people drive around aimlessly looking for garage sales. Sundays are likely to be slower, with most traffic in the late morning and right after churches let out.

Major holidays generally produce less customers. Too many folks are traveling or making party preparations. Thursday and Fridays are likely to draw dealers looking for bargains and people running errands who happen to see your signs. Advertising in the newspaper, will likely bring in more customers, especially on slower days.

LOCATION

Consider yourself blessed if you live near a high traffic area. In this case, you may not need to advertise in the newspaper, being able to draw in a stream of customers who happen to drive by. The advantage to this is if something happens, you don't feel up to doing the sale or the weather turns icky, you can cancel the sale and no one will be the wiser.

If you are running the sale out of your garage, you can get a big head start in setting up. Be sure to cover or remove anything you don't want to sell or have stolen. Blockade areas where you don't want folks to roam.

To reach more customers, consider having your sale at a local flea market or swap meet. If you live in the boonies, see if a friend will let you use their driveway for your sale, luring them into your trap by suggesting they put their stuff in the sale, too.

SIGNAGE

Make your signs well ahead of the sale. As time draws near, you will be busier than you expect making other preparations for the sale. Starting from main roads, drive the route to your home, making note what you will need to write on each sign, which way to point the directional arrow and how you will post the sign.

Arrows work best to keep folks on track, with your full address shown when posted on streets other than your own. I live off a main road, so my signs usually say “Sale 904” with an arrow. (904 is the house number.)

Make the letters 5-6” in height and thick. Use as little wording as possible. You want to catch the eye of drivers who hopefully still have the other eye on the road and not likely to have time to read the small print.

Consider having all the signs look the same. For example, neon green paper glued to cardboard or painted on wood, that way if others are having sales, prospective customers will know they haven’t been to the “green sign” sale, yet.

Avoid nailing signs to power line poles or attaching to street signs; you could get fined. My brother has been a lineman for years; he and his peers would appreciate not being injured or having uniforms ruined by your nails.

Be aware that some cities are strict about private signs on public lands, which includes the grassy area between the street and sidewalk. You can be cited and possibly fined. My neighbor had a public official show up during his sale. The official had plucked up the sign and chastised him in front of his customers. That was the end of that sale.

The sign can be made on cardboard, plywood or anything sturdy. Posts can be made from wood scraps, metal or bought pre-made from hardware stores. Signs can be painted on weighted cardboard boxes or use paper bags weighted with rocks, filled with crumpled newspaper; roll the top and staple it shut. Keep in mind that cars whipping past your signs and windy days can make sails out of your signs.

Post the signs either after 6 pm the night before your sale or early in the morning of the sale. Do a test drive to see if you can read the signs easily. Be courteous and take your signs down immediately after your sale.

ADVERTISING

Check your local newspaper to find out how much an ad will cost. Most print newspapers have free garage sale classified ads online.

Tell your friends to tell their friends. See if neighbors would like to have a sale the same day. That is one way to increase your flow of traffic, people love being able to hit several sales in one fell swoop.

Before placing your ad, review other garage sale ads to get ideas. If this will be a multi-family sale, be sure to mention it. Include your address and name a few of the big items. Avoid using your phone number, unless you have voice mail to answer any late night or early morning calls. Be sure to state the hours of the sale and “no early birds” or they will be knocking on your door before dawn or the night before.

If you know of local community bulletin boards that will allow you to advertise your sale, do so a week before the sale. Consider making tear off strips with your address. Note the main items for sale and if it is a multi-family sale.

PRICING

Use your intuition and common sense when it comes to pricing items. People often have a harder time letting go of items they purchased at full price. It is much easier to cheaply sell items that were gifted or bought used. Ask yourself, “What would I like to pay for the item?” Get over the attachment and price the items to sell.

You don’t have to kill yourself by pricing every object. Focus on labeling the higher priced items first. During the sale, if an item hasn’t sold as fast as you hoped, cross out the initial price and write a new price. People love to buy marked down items. Be ready to haggle.

Place your price labels on the top or sides of the item where they can be easily read. On large items, tape or pin larger signs, using a half sheet of paper or 3x5 cards. As you are pricing items, open CD and DVD covers to be sure the discs are inside. Check pockets, inside purses, items and boxes to be sure they are empty.

While we’re on the subject of pockets, note that clothing generally sells poorly. Exceptions are sweaters, jackets or items that can easily be tried on over clothes. Infant and young children’s clothing often sell well, if the price is right.

As you price items, take time to make them presentable; wash or mend them. You may want to add a note to certain items such as “the vacuum works but needs a new belt.” Consider posting an “All Sales are Final” sign to avoid any hassles later.

Books, videos, CDs, DVDs, etc. don’t need to be priced individually, unless they will be sold at higher prices, such as collector’s items. Make a large sign stating all paperbacks are \$_____, all CDs are \$_____. People love a deal; you might want to have a sign “buy three get one free.”

Have a box labeled “FREE” by the curb and set apart from your other stuff. Put items you don’t think will sell but someone might be able to use for rags, parts or art projects.

THE BOOTY

Keep your money in a safe place. I don’t recommend having a money box, unless you have a trusted adult whose only role is to take the cash and guard the booty. A fanny pack worn in front of your body or pockets that are deep or close with velcro make great cash holders. Keep the coins in one section or pocket and bills in another. After each sale, take time to fold your bills together and use a money clip or paper clip to keep them together.

At one of my sales, I found a twenty dollar bill on the ground and wasn’t sure if I had dropped it or one of my customers. As three ladies were about to drive off, I heard one shriek, “My money! I can’t find my twenty dollars!” Apparently, her twenty dollar bill fell out when she pulled a quarter out of her pocket to buy a trinket. Believe me, that trinket wasn’t worth \$20.25! We both were happy the money found its rightful owner and both of us learned a lesson about cramming bills in our pocket.

When your fortunes begin to amass, thin your money wad by taking some of the excess bills, especially the twenties and put them in the home, away from the door and out of sight.

Sometimes, a customer may ask you to hold an item until they can get to the bank. If they want to run to the ATM to get the money, I give them a time deadline, no more than an hour. In the meantime, if another customer expresses interest, I tell them the situation and offer taking their phone number in case the other buyer doesn’t return.

People that want to bring their partner by later or have you hold the item for several days until they get their paycheck, rarely follow through. For these folks, I suggest they give me their phone number and I will call them if the item doesn't sell.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Never leave customers unattended; things have a way of disappearing. Also be wary of people walking off who have "forgotten" to pay.

Be wary of allowing strangers in your home. There are many thieves who make their living by stealing at garage sales, sometimes casing your home for a future burglary. Direct them to the closest gas station or fast food restaurant if they say they need to use the bathroom.

If they ask to use your phone to check with someone about a purchase, either dial the number for them on your cell phone or a phone that reaches outside. Some may insist on trying on a piece of clothing before purchasing; it's my preference to lose a sale rather than letting a stranger in my home, especially if you have valuables in the room where they will be left unattended.

If you are having a sale where some of the goods are inside and some are outside, have someone help you monitor both areas. I was at a moving sale where a teenage girl had a large sign on her closed door that said, "Nothing for sale in here. Do not enter." She came home while I was there, very upset to find that someone had stolen her jewelry.

Small items such as jewelry can be displayed or attached to larger pieces of cardboard or in a case, making it a little more difficult to swipe.

If you are selling any electrical items, have a plug or extension cord available so they can test the item. Keep the cord out of the way so others won't trip on it.

Be sure your pets are not in the area of the sale. You don't want to lose customers who are afraid of Fido or allergic to Miss Kitty. All the extra commotion can over-stimulate your beloved who may nip when he's never nipped before. Heaven help the guilt if they get stepped on or run over by a car.

THE SALE

Do as much preparation ahead of time as possible. The day before the sale, rest your legs and back as much as possible. Get a good night's rest; you are going to need every ounce of energy you can muster.

Take time to have a hearty breakfast. Don't underestimate the time it takes to put up the signs, pull out tables and load them with your treasures. You'll want to have as much done as possible before the starting time of the sale.

Expect distractions from neighbors and early birds. The neighbors may not want to buy anything, but tend to take this most inopportune time to catch up on old gossip. Politely let them know you will be attending to business first, then chat only when there are no customers. If you want to get rid of them, ask them to help you.

Place toys and books for young children on a sheet or box on the ground where they can check them out and plead their parents to buy the newly found treasure.

Lure the men folk in by placing a "manly" table with tools, nuts, electronics, fishing equipment, etc. where it can be easily spotted from the street.

Display your books so the titles can be easily scanned, either on a table or spine side up in a box. If you have your sale organized by genre, such as kitchen items on a separate table, consider displaying cookbooks on the same table.

If you have books you intend to sell at a higher price, mark them individually on the cover and display them away from the other books with a sign stating these are a different cost than the others.

Before the sale, go through each book and cut or mark out personal information and remove any personal papers inside. Place genres together. For example, place fiction books in one box, health related books in another, etc.

Display your videos, CDs and DVDs in a similar fashion. Keep them out of the sun. Same goes for candles and other items that can melt or be damaged by the sun, dew or sprinkles of rain.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED TO HOST A GARAGE SALE

- At least \$100 in small bills, mainly ones and fives
- Several nickels, dimes and quarters
- Fanny pack or deep pockets to keep the money
- Labels, pens, markers, tape, paper to price items
- Signage
- Tables, shelves, bins to display your items
- A helper will make your day easier
- A chair to rest when things are quiet
- Bags for people to carry off their treasures
- Newspapers to wrap breakables
- Drinking water
- The day before, prepare “grab and eat” foods
- A smile and greeting for everyone who enters your realm
- Prayers to the weather gods

SHARE THE CHORES

Children should learn they are a valuable part of the family and help with household chores. Choose jobs that are age appropriate, without overburdening anyone. Two year olds can put away their own toys. By four, they can help with pet care and putting their clothes away. By six, they can make their beds. By eight, they can help with the laundry. By ten, they make great little slaves. Just kidding!

Have a family meeting to discuss who will do each chore. Make a list of all the things that need to be done and let everyone choose the ones they prefer. Then delegate the others by ability and available time. Expect some groaning. To help the kids be more appreciative, parents list all the things you do that the children cannot do: buy groceries, taxi service, other shopping, errands, your jobs, heavy-duty work, etc.

When I had the family conference with my children, I felt it was up to them to keep their shared bathroom clean. My daughter gagged when it came to touching the toilet (her brother had bad aim). He hated to scrub the tub. They decided to take turns each week cleaning the bathroom. One week he would clean all but the tub, which she would scrub. Next week, she cleaned all but the toilet, which he cleaned.

On the refrigerator, we kept a chart similar to the one on page 33. When they were little, I made a new copy each week. After they finished their chore, they put a sticker on the job.

Here are some ideas for weekly chores; adapt as suits your family. Launder towels, clothing and sheets, dust, vacuum, mop, sweep inside and out, clean mirrors, windows, light switches, walls, cabinets, toilets, sinks, tub, shower, tiled walls, dust ceiling lights, fans, shake out rugs, empty and take out trash and recycling, pay bills, feed, bathe, brush, walk, feed and clean up after pets, water plants, mow, edge, rake, pull weeds, etc.

You can also create a monthly chart for those “not so often” chores, such as: wash windows and screens, wash car, attack cobwebs, wipe fingerprints from walls and cabinets, clean refrigerator, de-clutter, file, vacuum furniture, curtains and blinds, clean oven and microwave, wax floors, clean light fixtures and ceiling fans, shopping, vacuum vents, polish silver and brass, clean bathroom tiles, thin out catalogs and magazines, straighten closets and drawers, filing, wash trash cans, clean computer and the myriad of other things that creep up.

You might want to have someone in charge of changing the air conditioner filter each month when the electric bill is due.

WEEKLY CHORE SCHEDULE

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednes	Thurs	Friday	Satur
Dad	Mow & Edge Dishes	Trash	Dinner	Dinner	Feed Fido	Dishes	Dinner Dishes Feed Fido
Mom	Sweep Walk Dinner		Laundry	Dishes	Groceries Dinner	Feed Fido Dinner	Sweep Mop Vacuum
Junior	Feed Fido Pull Weeds	Feed Fido Dinner Homewk	Feed Fido Dishes Homewk	Recycle to curb Homewk	Dishes Homewk	Wash Linens Homewk	Bathroom 1, 3, 5th Help Mom 2 & 4
Missy	Brush Fido Sweep Porch	Dishes Homewk	Help with Laundry Homewk	Feed Fido Homewk	Brush Fido Homewk	Wash Linens Homewk	Bathroom 2 & 4th Help Mom 1, 3 & 5

SAMPLE SHOPPING LIST

Having a comprehensive shopping list helps cut down on extra runs to the store. Create one on your computer, print a copy, place it in a plastic sheath to protect it and keep it on the 'fridge or handy place. Do a quick run through the list to see what you are running low on and add those items to your shopping list. Update as needed. Below are some ideas to get you started.

Download a more comprehensive list that you can adjust to your specific needs at:
<http://theresacrabtree.wordpress.com/klutterkontrol>

BEANS / LEGUMES

Adzuki
Baked Beans, Canned
Black Beans, Canned
Black Beans, Dried
Black-Eyed Peas
Beans, dehydrated
Five Bean Salad
Garbanzos, Canned
Garbanzos, Dried
Kidney, Canned
Kidneys, Dried
Lentils
Mung
Pinto
Refried Beans
Split Pea
Sweet Peas, Canned

BEVERAGES

Almond Milk
Apple Cider
Coconut Milk
Teas

CANNED GOODS

Enchilada Sauce
Hominy
Pesto
Salsa
Sardines
Spaghetti Sauce
Soups
Tuna

FLOURS

Amaranth
Barley
Brown Rice
Mesquite
Spelt

DAIRY

Eggs
Feta
Parmesan

FRUITS

Fresh
Apples
Apricots

Bananas
Berries
Cantaloupe
Cherries
Dates
Ginger Root
Limes
Nectarines
Peaches
Pears
Plums
Prunes
Raisins
Strawberries
Watermelon

Processed Fruit

Apples, dehydrated
Apples, Preserves
Apricots, Dehydrated
Cherries, Dried
Ginger, Crystalized
Olives, Black
Olives, Green
Peaches, Dried
Pears, Dried
Pineapple, Canned

MISC

Apple Cider Vinegar
 Baking Soda
 Balsamic Vinegar
 Bragg's Aminos
 Miso
 Tamari, Low Sodium
 White Vinegar(cleaning)

GRAINS / CEREALS

Amaranth
 Barley
 Cous Cous
 Quinoa
 Rice Pilaf
 Rice, Arbor
 Rice, Basmati
 Rice, Brown
 Tabouli
 Wheat Berries

HERBS / SPICES

Alfalfa
 Anise
 Basil
 Bay Leaves
 Cinnamon
 Cumin
 Curry Powder
 Oregano
 Paprika
 Peppercorn, Black
 Salt
 Tumeric
 Vanilla

SUPPLEMENTS

Acidophilus
 Magnesium
 Minerals
 Spirulina

NUTS / SEEDS

Almonds
 Almond Butter
 Cashews, Raw
 Flax, Golden
 Mixed Nuts
 Pecan
 Sesame Seeds
 Sunflower Seeds
 Tahini
 Walnuts

OIL

Almond
 Coconut Oil
 Grapeseed Oil
 Olive Oil
 Sesame Oil

PASTAS

Angel Hair
 Macaroni, elbow
 Linguini

SNACKS

Crackers
 Odwalla Bars
 Rice Cakes

SWEETENERS

Brown Sugar
 Honey
 Molasses, Unsul, blkstrp
 Stevia

NON EDIBLE ITEMS

Aluminum Foil
 Bags: Sandwich
 Bags: Quart
 Bags: Gallon
 Bags: 13 Gallon
 Bags: Yard
 Bleach

Dish Detergent
 Kleenexes
 Laundry Detergent
 Lids, jars, sm & wide
 Napkins
 Oil, Car
 Paper Towels
 Saran Wrap
 Shampoo
 Sponges
 Toilet Paper

VEGETABLES**Fresh Veggies**

Asparagus
 Avocados
 Broccoli
 Cabbage
 Carrots
 Celery
 Cilantro
 Corn
 Cucumbers
 Garlic
 Green Beans
 Green Peppers
 Onions, Bulb
 Parsley
 Potatoes
 Radishes
 Squash
 Salad Greens
 Tofu
 Tomatoes
 Sweet Pots, Fresh
 Zucchini

Processed Veggies

Corn, Canned
 Green Beans, Canned
 Mushrooms
 Sweet Pots, Canned
 Water Chestnuts

Publications by Theresa Crabtree

All paperbacks available at amazon.com or can be purchased at:
<http://www.theresacrabtree.com>

PAPERBACK

Mayan Messages: Daily Guide to Self-Empowerment

Based on the Mayan Tzolkin calendar, this 384 page paperback offers 260 inspirational messages guaranteed to take the reader to new heights of awareness. Read them freely online at: <http://mayanmessages.wordpress.com>

Available in paperback and eBook.

Feng Shui: Creating Places of Peace in the Home, Office and Garden

Reference guide for using gemstones, objects, essential oils, colors and shapes as a means to create a balanced flow of chi energy in your home, office and garden.

Gardening with Nature Spirits

Not just for gardeners! This fascinating book delves into how to create abundance in all areas of your life with the assistance of unseen beings from other realms.

eBOOK

Communicating with Nature Spirits

Create Your Reality: Setting Intentions

Field Guide for Those Left Behind

Four Point Coning Sessions

COMING SOON!

The Soul Connection