

Better Homes & Gardens.

SECRETS
OF GETTING

Organized™

MORE CALM,
LESS CLUTTER

12 WAYS TO TAME THE CHAOS

**GARAGE
MAKEOVERS**
PARK THE
CAR AGAIN!

**STREAMLINE
YOUR CLOSET
IN THREE STEPS**

LET GO OF CLUTTER

Professional organizers offer tips on donating, selling, and recycling all the items you don't want to keep in your house anymore.

WRITER RENEE FREEMON MULVIHILL ILLUSTRATOR TRINA DALZIEL



HOW DO I DECIDE IF I SHOULD SELL OR DONATE THE ITEMS I WANT TO GET OUT OF MY HOUSE?

JAMIE NOVAK This is one of the questions that trips people up. You know you don't want to keep an item, but what are your options? When you are unsure, you tend not to do anything. Look at the potential profit versus your time spent organizing a sale or posting an item online.

LAURA SOUDERS If you just want to be done with it all, then your decision is really easy: Donate it.

SHERRI CURLEY Selling is more time consuming than dropping off a donation or arranging a donation pickup. Do you have the time? Patience? Motivation?

KATHY VINES If you have access to the market where someone would buy it, try to sell it. But set limits about how long you will try to sell it and how low a price you would be willing to accept.

WHAT CAN I DONATE? HOW OFTEN SHOULD I GO TO THE DONATION CENTER?

JULIANNA POPLIN Don't donate stained clothing to an organization that's going to resell it unless you know they have textile recycling. I would ask them before drop-off.

KATHY VINES Throw out anything that is broken, damaged, stained, or well beyond repair. Don't donate your underwear.

JAMIE NOVAK I like to talk about the sister-in-law test. If I would give it to my sister-in-law exactly how it is, then I would feel comfortable donating it. Throw it out if it doesn't pass this test.

SHERRI CURLEY Before heading out to any donation facility, call ahead or check updated websites to verify acceptable items, current protocols, and hours of operation.

JAMIE NOVAK Think seasonally when you are donating things. Most organizations require you to bring seasonal items in advance because they don't have the storage space to keep them all year.

LAURA SOUDERS Take items as soon as you have a carload. If you get rid of stuff right away, you can appreciate the space that you have earned from all your hard work.

JULIANNA POPLIN Many people find it helpful to get items out of the house immediately so they aren't tempted to go back through a bag.

JAMIE NOVAK If you are in the middle of a big purge, I would say go to the donation center on a weekly basis or a monthly basis at a minimum. Taking three bags somewhere seems more doable than 20 or 30.

SHERRI CURLEY If you are extremely overwhelmed or don't have a car, try to opt for organizations that have pickup services. You can just set your stuff outside your front door or in your garage and arrange a date for them to come pick it up.



HOW CAN I GET IN THE HABIT OF DONATING ITEMS MORE OFTEN?

KATHY VINES I always want people to have a permanent box or location in the house where things they are ready to let go of can go. When you are doing laundry and you see something that's too small, you can put it right into the donation box rather than waiting until you go through the whole closet later.

JAMIE NOVAK You are bringing new things in all the time, and you should have old things going out all the time. Maybe you drop off things whenever you go to the grocery store because it's right down the street. Or schedule a donation pickup at the beginning or end of every month.

JULIANNA POPLIN I love using the pickup option. It helps me set a deadline. Once I'm on their list, they might call and tell me they are going to be in my area, which is great because then I think: *What can I go through before they get here?*

OUR EXPERTS

SHERRI CURLEY, professional organizer, The Practical Sort; Portland, Oregon

JAMIE NOVAK, professional organizer; Los Angeles and Northern New Jersey

JULIANNA POPLIN, professional declutterer and blogger, The Simplicity Habit; Seattle

LAURA SOUDERS, professional organizer, Healthier Spaces Organizing; Middletown, Pennsylvania

KATHY VINES, professional organizer, Clever Girl Organizing; Melrose, Massachusetts

Please see "Meet the Pros," page 90, for contact information.