

Organizing tips: top 12 things you can easily get rid of right now

By Jennifer Raftis, CPO®



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I often receive calls from clients who are overwhelmed by the amount of items they have in their homes and garages and don't know how to start editing their belongings. I compiled this list based on items I often find in my clients' homes that take up space but may not be needed anymore. This list of items that you can get rid of right now is a recommended start to your decluttering journey.

1. Bags, Backpacks and Totes (plastic, paper, cloth, canvas). I feel your pain on these items; they are useful, and, therefore, hard to get rid of. I recommend culling them to an amount that you are comfortable with and have room for, and sticking with that number. It takes real discipline to recycle bags as they come in!

2. Old Electronics - Our old phones, laptops, Ipads, chargers, cables are usually in a box in the garage because most people don't know how to dispose of them and/or erase the information. All three Lamorinda communities have Republic Services for their trash/recycling. You can get information about how to safely recycle and dispose of electronics at www.republicservices.com/residents/recycling-and-solid-waste/e-waste.

3. Anything Broken - I find many items - usually in the garage -- such as furniture and appliances, as well as clothing that all need some type of repair. These items are usually delayed decisions; I recommend assigning an end date for this task, and any items that aren't dealt with by the deadline are let go.

4. Tupperware and Food Storage Containers - The lids are not coming back and the stains from the spaghetti sauce are not going to come out. Take out every single piece of tupperware you own, match all the lids, and do a quality exam. Recycle these items now and replace them with a more environmentally friendly version such as glass containers.

5. Worn-out Towels and Linens - If you have tattered towels and linens, it might be time to donate them to the local animal shelter and purchase some new ones, be good to yourself!

6. Socks - Yes, it's time to weed through the sock drawer. It really can be done in half an hour! (The missing socks are hiding somewhere with the missing Tupperware lids).

7. Expired Food - I recommend pulling everything out from your pantry all at once. As you are disposing of the expired food, keep a note of all items you want to replace.

8. Expired Medication - Again, pull everything out all at once and keep a note of items that need to be replaced such as Tylenol or Advil. If you have expired prescription medication, I suggest removing or covering up the label that contains your personal information. The bottle can typically be recycled and any pills that are left can be put in a plastic bag and disposed of at a designated drop-off location for free at one of these locations.

- Town of Moraga, Police Department, 329 Rheem Boulevard, Moraga

- City of Orinda, Police Department, 22 Orinda Way, Orinda

- City of Lafayette, Police Department, 3471 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette

9. Old Magazines/Newspapers - I recommend tearing out the recipe or information you wanted to save from the magazine or paper, or possibly taking a photo of it and storing it in an album on your phone for future reference. Keep in mind that the information becomes outdated very quickly. Recycle, recycle and recycle those magazines and newspapers!

10. Paint/Toxic Products - Don't let these

products pile up in your home and in your garage, they multiply very quickly. Put a date on your calendar to take them to the toxic waste center. It can be helpful to record the paint color and the room it was painted in before you dispose of the paint can.

11. Excess Cooking Utensils - Pull out all the utensils, put all duplicates together, and see what you can donate or maybe even replace for newer, more efficient items. Most homes I've worked in have at least eight spatulas.

12. Clothing - If you don't have a donation container in your closet, you should; it will make it easier to let the items go that you are not wearing. If you have designer clothing that you no longer want, you can try to consign the items. Here are a couple of local clothing consignment options.

- Designs 2 Consign, Moraga
- ReCHIC, Orinda

Every item you release makes room for more space in your home or something that can better fit your current life right now. This will help give your mind and your home a perfect spring reset.

Professional Organizer, Jennifer Raftis, CPO® founded Efficiency Matters, LLC to help you with all of your organizing needs for your home and business. She is a Certified Professional Organizer and an active board member with NAPO, National Association of Productivity and Organizing Professionals.

She is also an independent representative for The Container Store and has expertise in designing closets, garages, pantries, playrooms and more. In addition, she is a Corporate Organizing and Productivity Consultant and has worked with Fortune 500 companies across the U.S. Another large part of her business is move management especially working with seniors who are downsizing. She and her husband have lived in Moraga for 30 years, raising 3 kids and working countless volunteer hours with many local non-profit organizations and schools. Jennifer@efficiencymattersllc.com, 925-698-3756 www.efficiencymattersllc.com

