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Leslie Straka

Personal Organizer

www.personworks.com

leslie@personworks.com

cell: 425-922-3760

fax: 928-223-8938

10 WAYS TO REDUCE CLUTTER & ORGANIZE IN THE NEW YEAR

1. Donate books to the library, give them away on a network like Freecycle <http://www.freecycle.org/> or sell them on a website like Amazon. www.amazon.com
2. Tear out the articles you want to save and either file them or use Scanalog, a software system you can use to store, catalog and retrieve your favorite articles from magazines. <http://www.scanalog.com>
3. Purchase a metal or wooden grid and hang your pots and pans on the kitchen ceiling. This will give you extra space for your large assortment of kitchen tools. <http://tinyurl.com/2j88ge>
4. If your candles look old and used, get rid of them, or strike up the romance and use them up!
5. Put dishes into the dishwasher right away. To avoid putting your dirty dishes into a clean dishwasher purchase a magnet that says clean on one side and dirty on the other. <http://tinyurl.com/22zfvp>



- 6.. Make your home a shoe free zone. There are scads of shoe organizers out there to keep your kicks in order. This is one of my favorites: <http://tinyurl.com/343bwe>
7. Pick one day a week as laundry day and stick with it. This means the whole nine yards- washing, drying, folding and putting away. Take this opportunity to clean out your laundry room and make it more work friendly. Does your ironing board need a new cover? Is your iron up to snuff?
8. Right after you pay your bills, FILE THEM (for those of you who need to keep them for tax purposes). OR sign up for online bill paying: <http://www.checkfree.com/>
9. Go through your closet once every three to six months. If you haven't worn an item in that amount of time –except for seasonal clothes- you probably won't. Do yourself, and those around you, a favor –donate. Here's a list of organizations that accept donations, including Dress For Success, the women's organization provides career clothes for women in need. <http://www.orgcoach.net/taxdeduction.html>
10. Try to schedule appointments that are near each other on the same day. This will save you time. And gas. Better yet, carpool when you can.



STAGING YOUR HOME FOR SELLING



When you are putting your house on the market, a key thing is Stage Your Home. An essential part of staging includes de-cluttering. You want to make your home look like a warm and inviting hotel. Start with this list below, and you will be on your way to staging your home in no time!

SORT

Be sure to have three things ready: a donation box, a garbage bag and a recycling bin. Go through your house systematically, room by room. Start putting *likes with likes*. For example, put clothes you are going to keep in one pile. If you have kids' toys that are no longer used, put them in the donation box. Extra light bulbs that you're not going to use in your new home can be recycled; see the following article for tips on how to recycle these and other items.

TOSS

Purge, Purge, and Purge! Now is the time to throw things away that can't be recycled or donated! Liberate yourself from those bottles of shampoo that just have a smidgen left (I know you've got a few of these around in the shower!). If you have things lying around that haven't been used in years, old stinky mops and multiple brooms: toss them. You're not likely to use them in your new home and it'd be silly to move them. When you're finished purging, take your garbage to the curb, so you don't change your mind. Good Riddance!

Personal Photos – The key during a walk-through is to make potential buyers feel like they are *living in their own home*. Remember the idea is a hotel; there wouldn't be pictures of other guests would there? To this end, take all your “making merry around the Christmas tree” and “bbq-ing in the backyard” photos and pack them up.

Closets – This is a perfect time to pack up seasonal clothing that you are not wearing and put it into plastic bins. Having a less cluttered closet will make it look bigger. And remember, people don't want to see how you live, *they want to imagine themselves living there*; give them as tidy a palette as possible.

Collectibles – Go through your valued collectibles before you store them away. Maybe there are a handful you don't like or need anymore. This may be an opportunity to give some items away, or sell them.

Countertops – Be sure to keep countertops clutter free. Everything should look streamlined and clean. This is the perfect time to figure out what you need on the countertops and what you don't. If some items are continuing to come back to haunt you, you probably need to rethink your set-up.

DONATE

Here are some general donation stations:

Goodwill donation center locator: <http://www.seattlegoodwill.org/>

Value Village donation center locator: <http://tinyurl.com/38m37o>

Shalom Bayit: <http://www.ncjwseattle.org/DVproject.htm>

Eyeglasses Stores: Many eye glass stores, and many drug stores, will gladly accept these donations for those who cannot afford glasses but desperately need them.

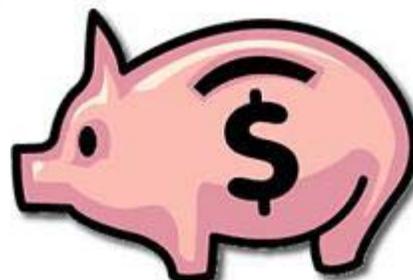
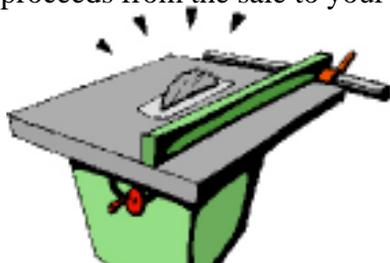
Doll museum – If you had a lot of dolls as a child and don't want to just drop them off at the local donation station, this is a great place to take them. <http://www.dollart.com/control.htm>



SELLING

Think carefully about what you are attempting to sell. Is it really worth your time to sell the item?

Figure out how much the item may be worth before attempting to sell it. A good way to get an idea about how much you may get for an item is to visit www.eBay.com and look at the same item being sold by other people. I would suggest selling big ticket items, such as a 2 year-old refrigerator, or a really nice table saw. You may, however, want to re-think selling Barbie dolls that aren't in their original box, as they don't tend to bring in very much money. Think back to the SORTING phase, these Barbies may be a hot ticket donation item for some little girl who's dying for a doll! If you don't have a lot of time to mess around with the intricacies of online auctions, one option is to hire someone to sell on eBay *for you* like <http://www.i-soldit.com/index.asp>; this company will sell your items for you, and send you a check or donate the proceeds from the sale to your favorite charity!



Kermit was **WRONG!** It's **EASY** Being **GREEN!!**



There are so many ways to be environmentally conscious these days, so don't be intimidated: **Think Green** and your actions will follow.

One way to save the environment is to recycle items you have into new uses. For instance take your old Ikea shelves. They needn't be in pristine condition. Just resuscitate and reuse them in your closet. Presto! Now you have a custom-made closet organizer for sweaters, shoes and the like, at no extra cost. Expensive custom closet systems, eat your heart out!

If you've decided you're through with something, but you don't want to throw it away, **RECYCLE!** To recycle outside your home, here are some ideas of places to take your well-loved items:

King County sports a fabulous list that tells you if your items are recyclable and where to take them. From carpeting to fluorescent lights to pesticides, and everything in between, this interactive guide has hundreds of solutions for all your recycling needs. <http://tinyurl.com/2j8vyw>.

These are just a few of the things that you can recycle with just a little bit of research:

- * An old, working refrigerator
- * A broken dishwasher
- * Wood (not stained or painted)



Below are other items in your home that you can take to local stores:

- * **Computer monitors** – Staples <http://tinyurl.com/nmajh>
- * **Used printer ink** – Staples – They award you a \$3.00 coupon for each one you donate!
- * **Cell phones** – These can go to battered women <http://www.snocobw.org/cellphones.htm> or to our soldiers in Iraq (in fact a free postage mailer came with a package from Amazon.com)
- * **Old PCs, Macs or any other used electronics** – for more information go to: <http://tinyurl.com/yp15re> there is also a great link to get rid of things through the king county solid waste called Online Exchange: <http://tinyurl.com/2e2olu>.

Remember Gandhi's words as you begin your recycling career
“Be the change you want to see in the world.”