

# HOME CLEAN HOME

---

Let's face it. We don't like it when our home is cluttered and needs to be cleaned. We can't find things. It can make us feel unsettled and anxious – when everywhere we look there is something that needs to be done. And who wants to have company over when the house is such a mess?

On the other hand, when our home is neat and clean, the opposite is true. It makes for a comfortable, relaxed, and pleasant environment. It is the kind of house we enjoy coming home to.

But, a *Home Clean Home* doesn't just happen. Having a strategy for your housework is essential! And, if you have a household of two or more people, it also takes teamwork. System Five to the rescue!

**In *Home Clean Home* you will learn:**

- How to de-clutter your home
- Ideas for maintaining order
- Suggestions for making housecleaning and laundry easier
- How to set up a housework schedule
- Tips for working together as a family

The time you invest to create a *Home Clean Home* will be well worth the effort!

# CONQUERING CLUTTER

---

## NEEDED:

### Paper Option:

\_\_\_ Clutter Control form

### Electronic Option:

\_\_\_ Computer (Use the Notepad section of your email account. If your email account does not include a feature for notes, open an email account with Yahoo or other email service that offers this, or open an account through evernote.com. Sync if you have a smart phone.)

Generally speaking, there are two types of clutter. One type of clutter exists when items are out of place, such as when clothes are not hung up, toys are everywhere, food and dishes are left out and papers are scattered throughout the house. The second type of clutter is a more controlled clutter where items are sorted into piles, stacks and boxes, and often *too many* piles, stacks and boxes.

When we think about getting organized, tackling household clutter is usually the first thing that comes to mind. Maybe that is because clutter is difficult to ignore. Unlike some other types of disorder, clutter is just so visible! Yet the thought of conquering clutter (beyond a surface clean-up) can seem overwhelming. Where do we begin?

The first key to accomplishing any major project is to divide the work into manageable pieces. As for decluttering, this translates into scheduling manageable blocks of time for the task.

Next, you need a plan. This system outlines a three-step plan for conquering clutter and offers suggestions for preventing future clutter.

Conquering clutter requires persistence and patience. In most homes, conquering clutter will not be a quick process. But, by chipping away at it a little at a time, the payoff for your efforts is more than worth it! You will be experiencing the many rewards of a clutter-free home before you know it.

## SCHEDULE TIME TO CONQUER CLUTTER

- ❑ Determine which days and times you can set aside to conquer clutter. Perhaps 30 minutes each day or one evening a week will work for you. If possible, also schedule one or more full days in the beginning to kick-start this project. In the time you have set aside, follow the instructions below.

## STEP ONE – MINIMIZE

We can accumulate many possessions through the years but, if we do not have a system in place for removing what we no longer need or want, our home eventually becomes overrun with “stuff”!

Why is the idea of minimizing so appealing? Simplicity is freeing. It frees our space. It frees our budget (i.e., purchasing less). We have fewer things to store, clean and maintain.

In her book, *A Place Called Simplicity*, Claire Cloninger says, “One rationale that helped me find the courage to get rid of so much excess baggage was this: I convinced myself that I was trading these possessions for something I treasured more – space. Not only physical space, but spiritual and emotional space. The space I was gaining by decluttering brought with it a peace and serenity and simplicity that made parting with my things possible.”

- ❑ Working in one room at a time and clockwise around the room, review each item and remove everything you no longer need or want. Focus on the rooms in your home considered “living space.” This is where your primary storage will be. (Conquering clutter in the secondary storage areas of your home – attic, basement, garage, and storage shed/unit – is included as an Optional System Enhancement.)

As you remove the items you do not need or want, separate them into the following categories, using bags, boxes or bins:

- Throw Away
- Give Away
- Sell

There may be some items you do not want to part with that do not necessarily warrant primary storage space. Relocate these items to a secondary storage area. When reviewing each room, also consider your furniture. Do you have pieces of furniture that no longer serve a purpose?

In most cases, the decision about what to keep and what to remove will be easy. This may not be the case with other “borderline” items. If you are not sure whether to toss or keep an item, consider these four questions:

When have I last used/worn this?

Be honest with yourself. Is this something you *really* need or want? Consider a year’s non-use as a general guideline for tossing most items.

Would this item be of more value to someone else?

That fabric you’ve kept a few years “just in case you decide to do something with it” may be more useful to your seamstress friend.

Can I sell this and use the money for something else I want or need?

Depending on how many items you have to sell, you might want to plan a rummage sale at the end of your weeding out process.

If this item has sentimental value only, can I instead save a small part of it or photograph it for a keepsake? For instance, how about photographing your children’s school projects instead of storing them?

- ❑ After answering the above questions, if you are still uncertain, bag or box the item and put it in your attic or another secondary storage area. Keep it for one year, then reconsider letting it go. (Be sure to include a reminder on your calendar to review the items.) After a year, if you haven’t needed it, your decision will be easier.

- ❑ Once you have finished “Minimizing” all of the rooms in your home, distribute the items you have decided to give away, and hold a yard sale, or advertise the items you want to sell.

## STEP TWO – CATEGORIZE

- ❑ Review each room in your home. In the first columns of your Clutter Control Checklist form, list the room and then everything within the room that you want to organize. See example below.  
(Or, if you are using the electronic method, create a Notebook titled “Clutter Control Checklist” in the Notepad of your email account. Each room in your home would be a separate Note within the Notebook, and everything within the room that you want to organize would be listed in the Note.)
- ❑ Decide, and list, what you want stored in each area and how you want to group these contents (i.e., the categories of items). Store as near as possible to the location in which items are most frequently used. For minimal structure, stick to broad categories.

### Example of Clutter Control Checklist form:

TO BE ORGANIZED	CATEGORIES OF CONTENTS
<u>MASTER</u>	
<u>BEDROOM</u>	
Clothes Closet (1)	Dresses / Skirts / Pants / Tops / Jackets & Coats / Robes
	Lingerie / Purses / Belts / Slippers & Shoes
Clothes Closet (2)	Slacks / Shirts / Vests / Sweaters / Suits / Jackets /
	Coats / Robes / Caps / Ties / Belts / Slippers & Shoes
Dresser	Lingerie / Make up / Jewelry / Scarves / Gloves
	Swimwear
Chest of Drawers	Pajamas / Undershirts / Briefs / Socks / Gloves
	Swimwear / Jewelry
Nightstands	Reading Material / Phone Directory
Under bed Storage	Bed Linens / Shoes (seldom worn)
<u>KITCHEN</u>	
Cabinets & Island	Food Preparation / Cooking / Serving / Storing /
	Cleaning / Table Linens
Drawers	Serving / Tools & Gadgets / Dish Towels &
	Pot Holders / Miscellaneous
Food Pantry	Spices / Condiments / Liquids & Sauces / Canned Goods
	/ Boxed & Packaged Goods / Drinks

## EXAMPLE

(A Note titled "Master Bedroom" in an Electronic Notepad  
filed in a Notebook titled "Clutter Control Checklist")

### MASTER BEDROOM

#### CLOTHES CLOSET #1

Dresses  
Skirts  
Pants  
Tops  
Jackets & Coats  
Robes  
Lingerie  
Purses  
Belts  
Slippers & Shoes

#### CLOTHES CLOSET #2

Slacks  
Shirts  
Vests  
Sweaters  
Suits  
Jackets & Coats  
Robes  
Caps  
Ties  
Belts  
Slippers & Shoes

#### DRESSER

Lingerie  
Make Up  
Jewelry  
Scarves  
Gloves  
Swimwear

#### CHEST OF DRAWERS

Pajamas  
Undershirts  
Briefs  
Socks  
Gloves  
Swimwear  
Jewelry

#### NIGHTSTANDS

Reading Material

#### UNDERBED STORAGE

Bed Linens  
Shoes (seldom worn)

### STEP THREE - ORGANIZE

- ❑ Working in one room at a time, one area at a time:
  - Remove from the area items not included in the designated categories
  - Collect other items from around the room (or house) that *do* belong in this area
  - Arrange (organize) your items, grouping like items together
  - If needed, purchase any organizing tools necessary to complete the job (Check out the variety of organizers at large home improvement stores, discount chain stores, and online.)

### PREVENTING FUTURE CLUTTER

Remember that the two most important things a family can do to prevent clutter are to eliminate excessive purchasing and to develop the habit of putting things back where they belong. The following are some ideas that can help in this effort.

#### Clutter Control and Young Children

- ❑ Use containers.

Separate children's toys, wardrobe accessories and other items into containers such as bins, baskets and boxes. Label each with the category of toys or items contained within. If your child is too young to read, tape or fasten pictures from a catalog, magazine, or computer clip art to the container.
- ❑ Lower closet rods and coat hooks to make it easier for children to hang up their clothes.
- ❑ Try a toy rotation.

If your home, or your child's room, is overrun with toys, try a toy rotation. Toys, other than a few of your child's favorites, are separated into two or three piles. Box or bag all but one pile and place them in a secondary storage area. Every one to two months swap one stored box/bag with the toys that are currently out. The toy rotation helps prevent clutter and makes pick-up time easier. (An added benefit is that children really appreciate and enjoy their toys all over again when they reappear.)
- ❑ Try a clutter control game to help your children form good habits.
  - Maid Service – Keep track of the number of items left around the house. Each week, present to your “clients” their bill for your maid service, which is a set amount of money for each item – fees vary according to age. (Or, chores can be substituted for money.)
  - The Lost It Box – The Lost It Box is similar to “Maid Service” except the items left around the house are collected and placed in the box. They are kept there until the fee is paid to get the items back.
  - Three Minute Pick-up – Whenever you notice a clutter build-up, call a “Three Minute Pick-up.” Set the timer. Those responsible for the clutter will have three minutes to put their belongings in their proper places. Whatever is still left out after three minutes goes in the Lost It Box. (The goal is that they learn not to take out so many things at one time.)

### **Clutter Control and Older Children**

- ❑ Consider different rules for your older children.

Because older children are beginning their transition into adulthood, one way to prepare them for becoming an adult is to gradually shift responsibilities and decision-making to them. Allowing them more freedom in how they keep their rooms is just one of many ways to accomplish this. Therefore, you might want to consider adopting one of these two policies:

- Allow your older children to keep their rooms as they choose, with obvious exceptions such as leaving food in their rooms.
- Set only minimal standards, such as requiring that the bed be made and that everything must be off the floor.

# CLEANING

---

## NEEDED

### Basic Housecleaning Tools:

___ cleaning caddies (2) (to store small supplies)	___ powdered cleanser	___ floor shine / wax
___ cleaning cloths	___ non-abrasive cleanser	___ carpet cleaner
___ sponges	___ window cleaner	___ broom
___ scouring pad	___ all-purpose liquid cleaner	___ dust pan & brush set
___ eraser pad	___ furniture polish/oil	___ whisk broom
___ scrub brush	___ oven cleaner	___ mop
___ scraper	___ tile cleaner	___ dust mop
___ bathroom bowl brush	___ tile brush	___ buckets (2)
___ duster	___ disinfectant	___ floor scrubber
___ rubber gloves	___ metal polish	___ wax applicator
___ small spouted pitcher	___ floor cleaner	___ vacuum

## HOUSECLEANING TIPS

Having the proper cleaning tools is very helpful. Also important are the cleaning methods we use. Here are some tips to make housecleaning easier:

- Take preventative measures to reduce housework.  
An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. When you select flooring, wall covering, drapes and furnishings determine how easy they will be to keep clean. Also, use doormats, rinse out the bathtub immediately after it drains to prevent soap scum, make eating in certain rooms off limits, etc.
- Set a time limit.  
You have probably heard the expression, "Work expands to fill the time allotted for it." This is certainly true with housecleaning. Have you ever had a very short notice that friends would be stopping by at a time when your house was a mess? It is amazing how much housecleaning can be done in a few minutes of focused work! Try setting a timer for 15-30 minutes of concentrated cleaning and see how much you can accomplish.
- Pick up before cleaning.  
It will make cleaning quicker and easier because you will not have to clean around and under things.
- Clean only what's dirty!  
Are your windows sparkling? No need to go through the motions simply because today is the designated day to do house-cleaning.
- Have the proper tools and keep them handy (See "Items Needed" checklist above.)  
Use your cleaning caddies to store supplies. They are easy to cart from room to room. Some people also like working with a pocketed cleaning apron.



- Dry-clean before wet-cleaning.  
On areas with plenty of dust or dirt particles (such as ceiling fan blades), vacuum, dust, or wipe with a dry cloth before “wet cleaning,” otherwise, cleaning will take longer because wetting dust and dirt causes grime.
- Give cleaning solutions time to work.  
Conserve elbow grease! Cleaning will be much easier with most cleaning solutions if you wait a few seconds before wiping. Try spraying tubs, sinks, kitchen appliances, etc. and allow to soak while you clean elsewhere. When you return in a few minutes, cleaning will be easier.
- Clean from top to bottom and clockwise around room.  
If we clean the kitchen counter and then clean the cabinets over the counter, chances are we will have to spot-clean the counter again. Work with gravity. Clean clockwise around the room to give yourself a more defined stopping point should your cleaning be interrupted.
- Clean one room at a time, then do floors last.  
You won’t waste time and energy back-tracking. Cleaning floors last is in keeping with the principle of working from top to bottom.
- Whistle while you work.  
Make cleaning time more enjoyable by listening to your favorite music, or an audio message, or talking on a hands-free phone as you go.
- Reward yourself for jobs well done.  
The bigger the job, the greater the reward.

## **LAUNDRY LESSONS**

- Cut down on your laundry workload.  
Buy clothes that require little or no ironing. Pre-treat and/or pre-soak stains and very dirty areas. Remove clothes from the dryer as soon as the dryer shuts off. Immediately hang them up or fold them to reduce the need for ironing. And, space permitting, keep a hanging rack next to your dryer.
- Put clothes in the proper place.  
Observe these helpful habits:
  - When taking clothes off hangers, place all empty hangers together at one side of your closet rod.
  - Put clothes where they belong when you remove them: clothes hamper (if soiled), back in closet (if clean). If you have the space, use separate laundry baskets for whites and colors. Have a specific place for family members to put clothes that need to be dry-cleaned.
- Read clothing labels and follow instructions.
- Check pockets before washing.
- Use mesh bags for small items and delicates.  
Put very small items such as baby socks, and delicates in a mesh bag to make them easier to find and to prevent damage.
- Do not over-stuff the dryer.  
Clothes will dry faster and be less wrinkled if you allow enough room for them to tumble. It also helps minimize wrinkling if you shake out each item as you transfer it from the washer to the dryer.
- Clean lint filter after each use.  
And, if you use a fabric softener, periodically clean your lint filter to wash away the residue.
- Let each family member be responsible for putting away their own clothes.

# THE HOME TEAM (WORKING TOGETHER)

---

It is important to develop a teamwork attitude. This is especially beneficial in the area of the home. Working together as a family on housework is one way to develop this trait. Not only will it help to get the work done but working together toward common goals can also serve to strengthen families.

## TEAM PLAYERS

### Husbands and Wives

- ❑ Reach an agreement about each person's level of responsibility with regard to housework.

If a husband works full-time and his wife does not have a job outside of the home, then they would probably aim for something other than a 50/50 split on household responsibilities. On the other hand, if both have full-time careers, equally sharing the housework and other household responsibilities is a goal worth working toward. The Housework Chart covered in the next section will give your family a visual picture of how the responsibilities are shared.

- ❑ Learn new skills.

If people do not feel confident about a task they are doing, they often avoid the task altogether. Your husband may be just as uncomfortable doing the laundry as you would be changing oil in your car. Make sure everyone has the skills they need for the chores for which they will be responsible.

### Children

If you are tempted to rescue your children from the responsibility of housework, I have one word for you – don't! Charles M. Spellman, Ph.D. says that "Just getting things done helps enormously to make a home run smoothly. But learning to work also builds character, moral strength, self-discipline and perseverance. It enables children to find their special talents and abilities and to develop self-confidence."

Edwin Kiester did a 40-year Harvard study of 456 teenaged boys from inner-city Boston. Regardless of intelligence, family income, ethnic background, or amount of education, those men who had happier and more productive lives, better marriages, closer relationships with their children, and healthier and longer lives, had three common traits as children. These boys truly knew they were loved and appreciated. They were disciplined. And, they had *household responsibilities!*

- ❑ Set a good example for your children.

Exhibit a winning attitude. If parents remain positive about housework and create an environment in which everyone works as a team, this will help children become more receptive to doing chores. Playing music while doing chores is one way to set a positive tone.

- ❑ Give children specific chores and a schedule for doing their chores.

This is where the Housework Chart comes in handy. (More on this in the next section.)

- ❑ Patiently teach the necessary skills.

Do not expect perfection. Praise your children when they've made an honest effort. And, don't go behind them and fix it "the right way." If your child is learning to make the bed and it is a little crooked, leave it. With time and practice he will improve.

- ❑ Rotate chores.

This helps break the monotony of doing the same chore over and over and it helps all involved to develop a variety of skills.

### **THE GAME PLAN**

- ❑ Create a win-win situation, a fair system that is considerate and respectful of all family members.
- ❑ Schedule housework so that everyone on the Home Team knows specifically what chores they are responsible for and a timeframe for completing their tasks.

### **CELEBRATE THE VICTORY**

- ❑ Praise children for jobs well done.

Sincere compliments and positive feedback can go a long way!

- ❑ Use a reward system for yourself and your children.

Finished a couple hours of major cleaning? Go out for coffee. Take a relaxing bath. Go see a movie. Spend a few hours on your hammock with a good book and glass of homemade lemonade. Decide in advance how you will reward yourself once you have completed your work.

Reward systems are also very effective with children. But, avoid giving monetary or material rewards for everything they do. This could set a precedent. What usually works best is expecting children to do certain chores because they are working together as part of the Home Team, but giving special rewards for big jobs and extra chores that are done.

# SCHEDULING HOUSEWORK

---

## NEEDED:

- ☐ Housework Chart
- ☐ Chore Chart form (for children)

There are definite advantages to scheduling housework. With a housework schedule:

- There is greater accountability because each person knows his/her specific responsibilities.
- Your schedule will serve as a reminder system for tasks that you want to do but are not done frequently enough for them to be easily remembered (such as turning the mattresses or checking the smoke alarm batteries).
- Scheduling housework results in more “defined time off” making your leisure time more enjoyable.
- You will have a greater sense of accomplishment.
- Seeing a list of everything needed to maintain a household can also help promote more understanding of this responsibility with all household members.

## HOUSEWORK CHART

If there are two or more in your household, plan a time to work on this chart together as a family. (If you live alone, although there is no one to share the chores with, remember there will also be less work to do!)

## TO DO

- ☐ Review the “To Do” column. Scratch through any items that do not apply to your household. (If completing this form electronically, delete lines that do not apply.) Add any other items that are not already listed. Remember to include recommended maintenance steps for your appliances and electronics.

## EACH WEEK / EVERY OTHER WEEK / ONCE A MONTH – ONCE A YEAR

- ☐ Determine how often each item will be done. Remember to set realistic goals. Keep in mind that because you schedule a chore to be done on a specific day doesn’t mean it will always be necessary to do it then. The schedule will bring it to your attention, then you can assess whether or not it needs to be done. You will only need to use the Each Week section and the Once a Month – Once a Year section, unless there are some items that you want to schedule bi-weekly (every other week). If so, indicate these items in the Every Other Week section.
- ☐ Consider each person’s priorities and pet peeves. For example, maybe you like the living room always clean and clutter free because it is the room that is most visible when people stop by. Your standards for that room might be higher than for the other rooms. Someone else may like to have the beds made first thing in the morning. Set goals according to what is important to your family. Remember that this is a team effort. Family members who are on opposite ends of the

spectrum – either very lax about housework or with perfectionist tendencies – should make every effort to reach a level that suits the family as a whole.

- ❑ If you are a household of more than one, decide who will be responsible for each chore. When possible, schedule according to personal preferences and skills. You might also consider occasionally rotating chores so everyone can develop a variety of skills and experiences. If you have young children, the guide below can help determine chores suitable for their age levels.

<b>Chores Typically Appropriate for Different Age Levels</b>	
<b>Age</b>	<b>Chore</b>
2-3	Empty wastebaskets • pick up toys
4-5	Put dirty clothes in hamper • help fold clothes • set table • clear table
6-7	Make bed • care for pet • fold clothes • put away clothes • water plants
8-10	Vacuum • help with food preparation • dry dishes • put away dishes • help carry in groceries • clean mirrors and windows • dust • polish furniture • clean out car • put out trash
11-12	Help with yard work • load dishwasher or hand-wash dishes • cook basic dishes • help put away groceries • change sheets
13-15	Wash car • mow lawn • rake and sweep • gardening • sort/wash/dry clothes • iron
16 & up	Should be capable of almost any chore an adult can do

- ❑ (OPTIONAL) Keep in mind that not all chores require the same amount of time. To determine if you have created a schedule in which the workload is fairly shared, estimate the average amount of time each person spends per week on chores.
- ❑ To help younger children remember their chores give them a visual reminder, such as those listed below. Be sure to include your child in the process of creating their reminder system.
  - For children too young to read use chore cards, created with index cards. Draw or paste a picture of each chore on a separate card. Post the cards on a bulletin board. Help your child form the habit of checking the board daily to see what chores need to be done.
  - Use the chore chart form for children old enough to read. Title the form (Example: “Amy’s Chores”). List chores in the first column. If chores are not done daily, place an “X” inside the box for each day of the week this chore is *not* to be done. You will need a new form each week, so make copies of the form before using. When your child completes a chore he/she can either check off the box or place a sticker in the box. (Stickers can be purchased at office and teacher supply stores.)
- ❑ If at all possible, families should plan to schedule their chores so they can work together as a team. Saturday mornings may work for many families, but if this timeslot does not work for your family, select another time. Working side-by-side can be fun and can be a teaching time for children. Many families say they don’t have enough family time. This problem is compounded when every family member is doing their own thing in their own timeframe. However, when families do their chores at the same time, the result will have the added benefit of clearing more free time for other activities.

## HOUSEWORK MAINTENANCE

### HOUSEWORK CHART

Perform tasks as outlined on chart.

Suggested frequency – As Scheduled / Add calendar reminders, if needed.

## OPTIONAL SYSTEM ENHANCEMENTS

### CONQUERING CLUTTER (IN GREATER DETAIL)

The way to be more detailed when conquering clutter is simply to create more categories. Sub-divide broad categories into smaller categories. For instance, rather than having a set of shelves for books (in general), group books together by type – such as reference books, children’s books, inspirational books, etc. Instead of having a dresser drawer for lingerie (in general), you would categorize (organize) within the drawer – bras together, undies together, slips together.

### SECONDARY STORAGE AREAS

In addition to conquering clutter in the “living areas” of your home, also conquer clutter in your secondary storage areas – your attic, basement, garage and storage shed. (Add these areas to your Clutter Control Checklist.) When organizing a secondary storage area, because some items stored in these areas may not be easily accessible, it is helpful to make an inventory list of these items and their location. You wouldn’t want to spend unnecessary time in the hot attic in July looking for the American flag when it is actually in the garage.