

ASK THE DESIGNER: Clutter

Clutter Vs. Keeper: Decluttering Your Home

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?Now that the kids are at camp for the summer I'd really like to do some de-cluttering but I don't know where to start. There's just so much stuff. Any advice??

Feel free to send me your comments or questions to askjean@nichedecor.ca

Now is a great time to de-clutter and get organized- The holidays are far away and the kids are away so the house is quiet. But what makes clutter, clutter? Where do you draw the line between a beautiful collection of pieces and an overwhelming mess?

The first thing you'll need to do is decide where you fall on the clutter spectrum. How much clutter are you comfortable with? Do you have the soul of an artist? Do you love bold colours, layered art, beautiful textiles and groupings of objects? If this sounds like you, you don't want to try and clear away all of the items in your space. These items inspire you and create an exciting energy in your home. The challenge is editing your possessions.

Do you have the soul of an architect? Are you more interested in the structure of things? Clean lines are more your thing, and you appreciate white or neutral spaces more than saturated colours. If this sounds more like you, everything in your home should be there for a reason- by being both useful and well designed.

Whether you're a minimalist or a maximalist, what gets defined as clutter has a lot to do with what is most useful to you. I tend to ask my clients the following questions to help them discover why they've been holding on to some items for so long, and whether or not they deserve a place in your home:

Does it get in your way? If you're constantly finding yourself annoyed with something, chances are, it's clutter. Pillows that you have to toss off the sofa in order to get comfortable, knick knacks that make cleaning tricky, and all of that stuff in your closet that poses a threat to your safety every time you open the door- these are your major problem areas. Start with them first!

Does it echo your sense of style? Your home is a place where you're free to decide how you want things to look and feel. It should be full of items that are there because they speak to you, not because you needed to fill a spot on an empty shelf. They should be a representation of who you are and what you love.

Is it sentimental? Family photos, heirlooms and your children's artwork can bring a smile to your face just by knowing that they're in your home. On the flipside, objects that bring up negative emotions qualify as clutter of the worst kind. An example of this may be a keepsake that reminds you of a difficult time in your life. If actually getting rid of them seems too tough, store them away somewhere where they're out of sight and out of mind. You'll feel better in your space instantly. If you feel like your mementos may be getting out of hand ask yourself if you still really appreciate these items day to day. When you have too many items competing for your attention they can start to lose some of their charm so try to edit things down every now and again.

Are you inspired by it? We have inspiration boards all around our showroom and offices filled with things that inspire us at that moment. There may be things in your home that at first glance look like clutter- stacks of books or shelves full of pottery. Once you recognize that these things are sources of inspiration for you you can find a way to display them neatly so that others don't label them as 'clutter' or 'mess'. The colours, patterns and textures we surround ourselves with can affect the way we feel dramatically. Take note of how you respond to colours in your home. It is just as important to play down the colours that make you feel low as it is to play up the tones you love.

This may be a daunting task when thinking of your whole home but take a room or two at a time and you'll flow through the process beautifully. Remember, my biggest advice is to always surround yourself with things that you love and that inspire you. We all have stress in our day to day lives so your home should be your haven and a place of relaxation.