



## 8 Quick Ways to Control Clutter

- 1) Recycle the newspaper daily.** In our house if it hasn't been read by 10 am I know it won't be read. Tomorrow another newspaper will arrive and the news will be fresh!
- 2) Open mail daily over the recycling bin.** Distribute it to family members via a bin, basket or by putting it in a designated spot. The location doesn't matter, but consistency does.
- 3) Deal with invitations.** Don't procrastinate. Decide. Either you are going or you're not. If you are, mark the calendar and save the invite. If you're not, phone your regrets and recycle it.
- 4) Capture clutter.** If you collect similar items together in a container it looks more streamlined. Magazines look neater in a magazine holder. Paperbacks look better in a basket. In our kitchen, we collect soup labels, box tops, pop-tops and milk-tops that we save for our church and school. But they were unsightly! I stash these in a basket under a low counter. No one notices the contents, it is easy to use and keeps them contained.
- 5) Clear your kitchen counter.** I first read this in *The New Messies Manual* by Sandra Felton. I am citing her out of a tremendous sense of gratitude. This is some of the best advice I have received. Once I cleared my kitchen counters of canisters, bread maker and toaster, my kitchen started to look cleaner. I had more work space. Without all of the clutter it is easier to maintain. I now stack 2 cake plates on the counter for a plant and fresh fruit. Everything else is tucked away.
- 6) Clean as you go.** There is a universal rule in cooking that states that you should, *clean as you go*. I have resisted this rule even though I have read it several times. I must admit that I finally tried it because the kitchen was starting to look like a biohazard zone every time I cooked. I am now a *big* advocate of this technique. Pots and pans do clean up easier and psychologically I feel more in control. Try it. Fill up the sink with hot sudsy water and wash as you go.
- 7) Keep an underbed box for your children's artwork.** Particularly in the early years kids come home with a tremendous amount of artwork. The easiest solution is to let the child decide what to keep and what to recycle. The only rule

is this, “If it doesn’t fit in the box it has to go.” This helps children learn to prioritize and keeps the art from taking on a life of its own.

**8) Make your bed every day.** Have your children make theirs. This instantly makes everything feel ordered. *Or* sleep European. Use a washable duvet cover over a fitted bottom sheet. When it’s time to make the bed, you make it in a snap...literally.

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