



## Why do we have all this stuff?

Does this sound familiar? There's one room or closet or desk in your home which becomes the dumping ground for all of the stuff you don't know what to do with. If too much time goes by, this can get out of control. I'm not immune to the phenomenon.

In fact, my husband and I spent five hours one Saturday going through stuff. I know, I know, you'd think I'd know better. But stuff happens! This is what we found and why we didn't deal with it right away:

- We found stacks of Styrofoam that came with an online order. I didn't want to throw the pile in the trash because it will take about a thousand years for it to break down in the landfill. But I also didn't know *where* to recycle it so I piled it neatly in the basement.
- We had a computer tower that had been sitting around for over a year, but we knew we had to destroy the hard drive or our personal info would leave us vulnerable...and we didn't know how to erase the hard drive.
- There were Lego sets that had been assembled but no longer had the directions or all of their pieces and we didn't want to throw them away, but we didn't think we should donate something that was incomplete.
- We found boxes of my husband's stuff which pre-dated our time together. We decided to shred the twenty year old checks and financial info.
- We found a bunch of stuff from the previous home owner: electrical stuff, tubes of caulk, surge protectors, tension rods. We hadn't used them in seven years.
- We also had an old mattress and box spring, we knew we could have it picked up by the city...but it seemed like such a waste.

As you can see many times clutter collects for one of these reasons:

**1) It requires action.** There is a whole other subset of that category: Requires action...but you're not quite sure what that action is, (ie. Erasing the hard drive.)

**2) It takes time.** Finding out what to do with each item and then *finding the time* to actually do it--takes motivation and follow-through.

**3) A decision is required.** You just aren't sure if you are done with the item or not. Should you keep it? Will you need it the moment you give it away? Maybe it's a family heirloom that you don't like it...but you can't throw it away.

**4) You hate waste or you don't want to add more junk to the landfill.** Find the right place for your donation. It is much easier for me to make a donation if I think I am putting it into the hands of someone who really wants it. Freecycle.com is a great resource for making that connection. Or sell items at a garage sale or on Craigslist and earn a little cash.

*Minneapolis metro cheat sheet:*

Here's where I headed with my stuff:

**South Hennepin County Waste Drop-off center in Bloomington:** I took bags of shredded paper, cans of paint and old wire dry-cleaning hangers. The facility was well-marked and easy to find and it has a drive-through. I showed them my driver's license, they unloaded my stuff and I was out of there! I noticed that they have a free shelf for things like paint.

**UPS Store** (Midway Center) 1360 University Avenue in St. Paul. They welcome Styrofoam and packing peanuts.

**Bridging.** [www.bridging.org](http://www.bridging.org) They have a drop-off in Roseville, MN a few blocks behind Rosedale. ( They will also pick up if you have several large pieces.) I like this charity because they are helping people who, through a variety of circumstances, are trying to rebuild their lives. Each client can receive furniture, beds, dishes and other household items that will help them establish their new home. Each person is allowed one visit in their lifetime.

**Re-use center** in Minneapolis (Hiawatha and Lake Street) I went here with recycled building supplies that were left in the basement by a previous owner. They are most interested in things like cabinets, windows, doors, bathtubs...but they did take my bags of miscellaneous home stuff.

We gave our computer tower to a guy who wanted it for parts. Another option would have been to leave it in the alley. The **city of Minneapolis** will pick up large items like TV's, computers and appliances at no charge. (Set them out ONLY on recycling day.)

We gave out incomplete Lego sets to a friend who is part of a group that builds for events at Legoland.

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