DECLUTTER YOUR LIFE WITH THE 2-day wonder cleanse

The joy of getting organised: clever solutions to get your life sorted

The beauty of deciding to sort your life out is that you can tackle as little or as much as you feel up to over the course of a weekend.

DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START?

Overwhelmed by what to declutter first? Look around you and find five things that you don't need or use. Start with unused or broken jewellery (if you haven't found the other earring yet, you probably never will), lone socks and gloves – and shoes that haven't been worn for a year. Put them in a bag or box to be donated or recycled. You've now started. Tomorrow, do it again.

THE GROUND RULES

1 Everything you own should have value, either because it's functional or beautiful, or you just love it. See it as a liberation to rid yourself of all the things that don't work, that you don't need or that you don't even like.

2 Every item needs a place where it "lives". Piles of stuff on the coffee table or kitchen counter creates chaos. Plus, things don't get lost if you habitually put them where they live. If keys live in a bowl or on a hook by the front door, you'll never waste time searching for them.

3 One thing at a time. Multitasking is all very well, but don't bite off more than you can chew. The best way to make sure of that is to tackle each job one by one, which is much better than leaving a dozen unfinished jobs.

DE-CLUTTER THE AIR

Enjoy your new space by making it smell divine – a scented candle is a little luxury that keeps on giving.

Invite spring in with The White Company's new White Geranium candle, £26, thewhitecompany.com. Fill the air with the relaxing aroma of Provencal lavender with L'Occitane's diffuser, £15, plus £11 for the fragrance refill; or its Néroli & Orchidée Scented Candle, £24, loccitane.co.uk. Or try the Sensual & Exotic aromatherapy candle from Eve Taylor, a beautiful blend of orange, patchouli, ylang-ylang and lime, £13, eve-taylor.com.

BEWARE THE INHERITED ITEM

4 Is your home a museum? It's easy to feel obliged to hang on to your great aunt's watercolours or tea set – and if you like them, that's fine. But things don't have to become yours simply because they've been given to you. You're not a bad person for giving away inherited items. The same goes for unwanted wedding or birthday gifts – no matter how much you love the person who gave them to you.

IS IT WORTH SOME CASH?

5 Don't get distracted from your cleansing mission by feeling that unwanted heirlooms are more important to hang on to if they're worth something. Give them to another family member who'd actually like them, or sell them on eBay.

ARE YOU SENTIMENTALLY ATTACHED?

6 Mementos from your own life are trickier because of the sentimental attachment factor: to you, they're the jeans you wore on your first date with your future husband; to anyone else, they're threadbare flares never to be worn again. The key to parting with items suspended in time is to forget the story attached to them. Really look at it, and if it serves no purpose in your life now, then let it go.

WORDS VICTORIA YOUNG **CLASSY CLEANER COMPILED BY** WENDY SALMON
PHOTOGRAPHS FULL STOP PHOTOGRAPHY, IPC IMAGES

Give your clothes some cupboard love

7 Take a ruthless look inside your wardrobe and get culling. With clothes, you need to focus your thoughts on today – rather than yesterday or tomorrow. Everything in your cupboard needs to make you feel good. If it doesn't – get rid of it.

8 Don't play the waiting game. It's okay to hang on to clothes you've grown out of if you're actively working on getting into them again. Otherwise, bin them, as they'll just act as a reproach. Ditto if you're waiting for tasseled jackets or snow-washed denim to come back into fashion, or if you bought something because it was on sale – but you've never worn it? It's worth living by the rule that says, "If you haven't worn it for a year, donate it."

9 Don't be sentimental. Even if you *really* loved something, if you haven't worn it for ages, you probably won't again. It might sound painful but even items like your wedding dress are worth reassessing. Do you have space to store it? Will your daughter wear it? If it's never going to see the light of day again, maybe it's time to say goodbye.

10 Get sorted. Once you've freed up some space in your cupboard, organise what's left: group shirts, jeans, skirts, dresses and so on together. If you don't already have some, get stacking shelves or plastic boxes for shoes, or a hanging shoe rack. It's worth investing in drawer liners to give you a gorgeous waft every time you open your deliciously uncluttered drawers. Try Perfect Linen Drawer Liners, £15, thewhitecompany.com.

RECALIBRATE YOUR KITCHEN

Your kitchen is a food preparation area, not a storage space. When it comes to a cleanse, your basic aim is to identify and get rid of the things that you don't use. Then group together similar items in the best places.

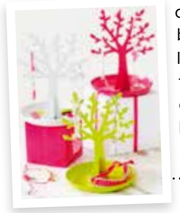
11 Appliances Broken or unused machines are just clutter. Rid yourself of pans with missing or broken lids (if that stops you using them), plus the bread, pasta or ice-cream maker that you *never* use.

12 Plastic pots These need a regular cull. Bin misshapen or discoloured tubs, and those without lids. Store in a stack, with the lids on. Or stack up all the tubs and put all the lids in the biggest tub.

13 Plastic bags Take the excess to a charity shop for reuse. Keep canvas bags in the car and a fold-up shopping bag in your handbag for impromptu shops. For pretty and sturdy canvas bags, see carolinegardner.com.

14 Cookbooks It's worth editing your collection. Be honest about how often you use each one. If a book is just for show, then donate it.

15 On display



Arrange your favourite jewellery on a tree holder. Hang necklaces, bracelets and earrings on the leaves and branches, and use the bowl for rings and small earrings. Metal tree jewellery holders, £8.99 each, Contempo at retreat-home.com.

16 Organise your photos

Start by making individual albums of the best and most precious moments; organise them on your computer if you're into digital, then upload to snapfish.co.uk. For prints, we love this box for 288 photos, in which you can categorise by year or event, £36, notonthehighstreet.com.

Classy Cleaner

It's time to treat your garden to a really good clean-up, so it's ready for those long summer days

17 PERFECT PATIO The winter months may have left your patio stained and full of weeds and moss, but Bayer Garden has the tools to restore it back to its former glory. Path & Patio Cleaner, £4.99; Path Weedkiller, £4.99; Moss Killer, £5.79, bayergarden.co.uk.

18 DANCING ON THE DECKS Weather-worn decking needs a regular revamp. Ronseal Ultimate Performance Decking Stain has 12 new colours – apply two coats with the supplied Perfect Finish Decking Pad, leave to dry and it'll be weatherproof in 90 minutes. From £29.99 for 2.5 litres, ronseal.co.uk.

19 REVIVE WOODEN FURNITURE Drab-looking items will need to be cleaned before you can liven them up with a coloured stain. Cuprinol Garden Furniture Cleaner removes dirt and grease – spray sparingly, leave for a few seconds, wipe off with a soft clean cloth, then repeat if necessary; £7.99, cuprinol.co.uk.

20 COLOUR ME BEAUTIFUL If your metal furniture is in need of a revamp, Plasti-Kote has 43 different colours and finishes to choose from. Give everything a good clean, then twist the top of the can and spray instant colour! £8.79 for 400ml, plastikote.com.

21 BB-QUICK-CLEAN If you've ever used the fantastic Oven Pride oven cleaner, you won't hesitate to try BBQ Pride – it's just as easy to use (pop in the bag and soak overnight), and gives the same brilliant results; £2.99, Sainsbury's.

22 PRETTY TOOLS Sort out the flowers from the weeds with a good pair of gloves, a trowel and a fork, £31.49, and don't forget sharp secateurs too, £17.99, all from stjohnsgarden centre.co.uk. All these tools are endorsed by the RHS, and designed to perform to the highest standards. **w&h**