



Clutter and Pests

According to some surveys, more than [25% of U.S. households have clutter issues](#) and [50% are overwhelmed by the stuff in their homes](#). But more than just stress, clutter creates spaces where pests like cockroaches, mice, and bed bugs can flourish. Clutter disrupts everyday life and increases the risk of health problems related to pests, mold, and dust. Asthma, for example, is aggravated by all three.

Reducing clutter creates a healthier environment by making it easier to control pests and eliminate allergens. Decluttering also removes pests' food and water and makes it easier to see signs of pests to get rid of them faster.

Here are some tips to help you plan for decluttering:

- **Make a list of the most to least cluttered rooms.** Tackle the problem room by room over time.
- **Target the areas causing the most problems.** This way you can focus your energy and mark progress as you go.
- **Focus your energy on the easy stuff first.** Start with disposing of cardboard boxes, small unfixable items, dried out markers, piles of magazines, and tackle larger unusable items, and so on.
- **Block out time to haul away larger items.** Things like used mattresses or broken furniture may require more effort to get rid of like a helper or vehicle. Make sure you have the time and resources.

Here are some options for what to do with items as you declutter:

- **Keep and move to a more useful location:** These are regularly used items that you can move and easily find.
- **Keep and store:** These are items used occasionally. For example, holiday decorations or seasonal clothing. Store them in clear plastic bins with labels and on shelving – off the floor, open shelving allows for better pest control.
- **Donate:** Good items for donation include children's toys and clothes, or extra dishes.
- **Sell:** Valuable items you no longer need can be sold. Things like furniture, collectibles, or working tools and appliances.
- **Recycle:** Cardboard, newspapers, old electronic equipment, or things made of metal can be recycled. Even some glass and plastic items may be recyclable. Look up your community recycling program for more details.
- **Trash:** These items have no value. If they are broken beyond repair, soiled, wet, or otherwise ruined, it's time to toss them.



Open shelving keeps items safe.



Store food in sealed containers away from pests.



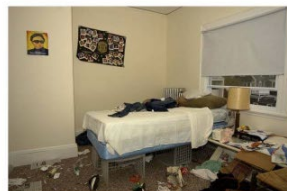
Other resources for decluttering:

- **Off-site storage:** There's an ever-growing storage industry. If you can't figure out how to get rid of something, paying for off-site storage may be the best solution.
- **Junk haulers:** Hiring a junk hauler is a great option if the regular garbage bin is too small or you just want to get rid of everything quickly. They usually charge by the cubic yard.
- **Professional organizer:** This option may be out of reach for many, but if you can afford it, they can help make quick work of clutter.

Few places for
pests to hide.



1



2



3

More difficult to
control pests.



4



5



6

Cannot treat
for pests.



7



8



9

Image Source: International OCD Foundation, Hoarding Center, Clutter Image Rating

Decluttering takes time but by taking the process step by step and being persistent, you can do it. Then you will have a healthier, cleaner, and less pest prone home, and maybe even less stress too.