



Let's Be Constructive While Cooped Up: Tackling Your Bookshelves, Paperwork and the Garage

We're all still at home, except for going out for essentials. I hope you're staying healthy and making the best of the current situation. Let's be productive and declutter a few more areas of the house.

- 1. Overflowing bookshelves:** I'm going to share "Kirsten's 50% Rule" with you. Doing this one shelf at a time, take everything off that shelf and set it on the floor or a table. Dust the shelf, then only put back 50%. What you don't put back gets donated, sold or discarded. The books you started and didn't like enough to finish, don't go back on the shelf. Neither do the majority of books you've already read. The knick knacks, seashells, and candles also get divided in half. So do your DVDs and VHS tapes. A less cluttered bookshelf has a more calming, open feel. Don't have guilt about letting go of books; when stores re-open, you can sell them at Half Price Books or donate them to Better World Books, Resale to the Rescue or your favorite charity. Let someone else enjoy them. Resale to the Rescue will also take your knick knacks, collectibles, DVDs and VHS tapes.
- 2. Home office:** This might be a dedicated room in your house, or it's the space in the kitchen that collects all the bills, coupons, doctor appointments, and this week's grocery list. If you have stacks of paper, take them to a comfortable spot and sift through them. Keep only what is truly essential. If you use your computer or smart phone's calendar, enter as many appointment reminders as possible. When you approach your file cabinet, have a box marked "shred" and another marked "recycle". As you go through each folder in your file cabinet, you'll discover what you needed to keep at one point, is no longer relevant. If there are documents you can scan and keep electronically, do that. If you're storing user manuals, you can probably discard those. Most companies have placed these on the internet for easy reference. Recycle documents that don't contain sensitive personal information, otherwise put them into the "shred" box. Your home shredder might be too small, so take your papers to an outside source for shredding. Office Depot, UPS and FedEx will weigh your papers and have them shredded for a fee. You may also find an annual community shredding event, which is often free. Take your old electronics, typewriters, calculators, cameras, TVs, camcorders and the like to St. Joe County's Household Hazardous Waste (828 Kerr Street in South Bend). It's free to drop off these items if you live in SJ County.
- 3. The garage:** Gather up the following and also take them to SJC Household Hazardous Waste: aerosols, batteries, paints and solvents, stains, finishing oils, thinners, pesticides/herbicides, weed and grass killer, insect killers, garden chemicals and other cleaning supplies (also those from under the kitchen sink). Try to reduce the number of garden tools in the garage, especially if you have hired a service to do your landscaping. Sweep out the garage and know it doesn't need to be perfect, but it should look organized and be able to fit the number of cars for which it was built.

NEXT WEEK'S ARTICLE: [Going outside and improving your curb appeal.](#)

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