

Fact sheet 3

Letting go of your things

Deciding what to do with your things takes time. The more you sort your things and make decisions about them, the easier it can become. Letting go of your things is one of many options you have available to you when you are decluttering – it's not just about throwing stuff out. As you sort through your things, it can be helpful to keep asking yourself questions to aid your decision-making.

1. **Question: Is this item essential to my life now?** Do I really need it or has the item created a need in me? When did I last use this item? Did I even know I owned this item before I found it just now? If I were in a shop today, would I buy this item? If I lost it, would I replace it? Do I like it? What's the worst thing that would happen if I let it go?

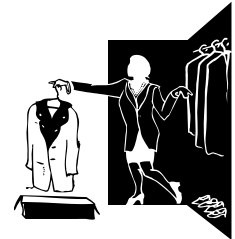
Answer: Many of us can live without a lot of the things we have surrounded ourselves with. The more stuff we have, the harder it can often be to find what we are looking for. We may buy duplicates as a result and end up wasting money, instead of saving it.

2. **Question: Was this a gift that I've never really liked or wanted?** Do I feel guilty about getting rid of a gift?

Answer: Focus on the person rather than their gift to you. Is your happiness based on what other people buy for you, or on your friendship with them?

3. **Question: Did I spend a lot of money on this item?**

Answer: The money is already gone and you probably cannot get it all back. Recouping some of the cost of it might ease the pain of getting rid of it. Check first what similar items sell for. It is probably not worth as much now as you paid for it originally. If it doesn't sell first time around, let it go. Give away quickly, rather than sell slowly.



4. **Question: Does it work or is it broken?** Have I already replaced this with something else?

Answer: If you are no longer using it, then let it go and make space to store a working/newer version.

5. **Question: Am I keeping this item just in case?**

Answer: Decide exactly when, realistically, you are storing this item for. When that date comes along, you will probably need something slightly different to what you have been keeping. It's very unlikely that you will need the same item at some point in the future. Your home is a sanctuary not a storage unit. You may not even be able to find it amongst all your things if you did need it. You might like a new version of it when you need it. The space you create by letting it go could be used for something you really do need or treasure. Your tastes and needs change over time and so it's ok that this item is no longer for you. You can give yourself permission to let it go.

6. **Question: Do I feel apathetic about this item?**

Answer: Let it go and make room for something you really do like.

7. **Question: Does this item hold memories for me?**

Answer: If it makes you feel happy, keep it. Put it out somewhere you can see it or use it. If it makes you feel sad, let it go and it can take the sadness away with it. Make room for new, happy memories in your life.

8. **Question: Have I decided to get rid of this item, but don't know what to do with it?**

Answer: Once you've made a decision, your job is just to get the item into a bag and off to the charity shop, recycling point or tip. As soon as you are finished decluttering, place the bag into the boot of your car or in the hallway, so it's ready to go. Don't worry if you're not sure whether the charity shop can sell your stuff. Let them decide that. They're the experts and will know what to do with it straight away. If they can't sell it, they can often still earn money by selling it to a dealer for rags. There is a lot of information on line about recycling – check out your local authority web site as a starting point.

Still finding it hard to let something go?

- We often get used to our clutter and just walk past it like it's wallpaper. If you take a photograph of your clutter and look at it, you may find you are seeing it properly for the first time. Study the picture and notice what's making up the clutter. Imagine it's a picture in a magazine. How does it make you feel when you see it like this?
- Close your eyes and imagine yourself in your room but it's now completely free from clutter. It's just how you want it to be. There is space on the floor, clear surfaces and tidy cupboards. You can find what you need and it's easy to keep clean. You love spending time in this room because it makes you feel relaxed and calm. You feel like you can breathe. How does this make you feel? How do you feel when you open your eyes?
- Imagine your home looks and feels just the way you want. You can invite your friends round and cook a meal. It's a place where you can move around easily. It's a restful sanctuary where you can close the door on the rest of the world. How does this make you feel?
- Look at pictures of finished rooms that inspire you. Collect them into a scrap book or make a mood board. Stick the board up on the wall to encourage you to make it happen.

Techniques for purging your things

- Take a black sack and go round your home and collect 10 things you know you can immediately bin or give away. Perhaps they are broken or haven't been used for years. Focus on how it feels to let go of something.
- Try to do 15 minutes a day of decluttering, rather than tackling a whole room in one go. You could do the same time each day - maybe when the TV adverts are on, or the dinner is cooking in the oven. Start with one box, shelf, cupboard or pile. A little often really will make a difference in the long run.
- Group things together such as all your vases, books, CD's, cutlery. Count how many you have. Your home only has room for so many things. Decide how many would be a realistic number to have. Get rid of the rest.
- Put the items you can't make a decision about into a box. Seal the box and write the date on the side. Store it somewhere out of the way, like in the loft or under the bed. Make a note in your diary for 6 months or 1 year from today. On that date, go back to the box. Have you ever needed anything from it? If not, do not open it. There is nothing in there you need. Take the box straight to the tip.

Letting go when it's hard

- Take a photograph of an item before you let it go. Put the picture into your memories box until you feel able to let it go.
- Habits can take up to 21 days to change and that's if you're doing them every day, consecutively! Don't be hard on yourself if you feel it is taking a long time to change.

