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 Serene Transitions  · Oct 1, 2021 · 5 min read



## Decluttering 101 - The Four Bin Method

Updated: Nov 30, 2021

We all have areas in our homes where we collect “stuff” — my home included! In the vast majority of moves I manage, my clients have areas of their houses where “stuff” has been stored untouched for 20, 30, or even 50 years. We’re not talking hoarders here — this happens in practically every home.



 Let's Chat!

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Clutter affects our emotional, physical, and psychological well-being, especially for older adults. It can lead to feelings of depression and isolation, present trip hazards and fall risks, and leave us with a sense of helplessness and hopelessness.

Even if we know we don't want clutter in our space, there are a lot of reasons why we don't get to sorting through our accumulated belongings. For one thing, it's not much fun, and it's hard work.

Most of us try to declutter from time to time, but we often don't really know where or how to begin. We just end up rearranging things without really reducing the volume of our stuff.

When it's time to refresh and declutter your space — because you're preparing for a move or just because you'd like to feel better in the space you inhabit — Serene Transitions can help make the process as smooth and efficient as possible.

If you don't have the time or desire to declutter yourself, we offer professional, compassionate decluttering services. If you do want to tackle decluttering your home, try using the Serene Transitions Four-Bin Method!

Looking at an entire house to declutter is overwhelming, so let's break it down and work room by room.

### How to Declutter

- 1) Pick the room you use the most or a room that feels least daunting right now; this will be your first decluttering target.
- 2) Set out four bins for yourself and label them:
  - a. Keep\*
  - b. Sell
  - c. Donate
  - d. Trash

Everything in your house is going to fall into one of these categories.

*\*If you're not moving, you may not need a bin for the items you intend to keep — rather, you can just put the "keep" items back in their rightful place.*

- 3) Starting in the corner of the room closest to the doorway, work your way around. Pick up every item you encounter in the room and place it in one of the four bins. Continue until everything has found its way into a bin.

If you have questions or would like more decluttering guidance, [please reach out](#). Serene Transitions offers compassionate [decluttering and move management](#) services for seniors.

## The Bin System

### The Keep Bin

You should keep anything you use regularly, love, and couldn't bear to part with. If you're decluttering and *not* planning on moving, you don't need to put the "keep" items into a bin — simply evaluate them, decide you want to keep them, and return them to their rightful place in the room. If you're decluttering with the intention of moving, use a "keep" bin to store your precious items.

Additionally, if you're preparing for a move, I suggest using a floor plan with dimensions of the space to which you're moving to help determine what furniture to keep. Here's where you would work with your move manager to decide which pieces of furniture will fit in your new space (this is a service I offer!) — if you like them and they fit, keep them.

### **The Sell Bin**

The sell bin is where valuable items that you don't need anymore should go.

Appraising an object's value can be tricky — an item is only worth what someone is willing to pay for it. Sometimes we have collections or items that we think have value but really don't (such as Beanie Babies, National Geographic magazines, and Depression glass), and managing sales of individual items can be time intensive.

If you decide you'd like to sell some of your items, there are a few options:

- You can use eBay, Craig's List, or any online marketplace to sell individual items.
- You could have your family or community help you with a yard sale if you want to get rid of items quickly and for slightly less profit.
- Online auctions can be one of the most efficient and lucrative ways to sell items, and Serene Transitions can manage the auction for you if you'd like outside help. Often, my clients make enough from an auction to cover most, if not all, of my fees for managing the auction.

### **The Donate Bin**

What about items that have practical or sentimental value but are not valuable enough to sell? These are the give-away/donation items.

How many of you still have things that belong to your children around the house? My mother-in-law passed away last summer at the age of 101. She held onto my husband's childhood toys and memorabilia right up to the very end. He would have appreciated the children's toys a lot more when his own kids were little, so if you're keeping anything of your children's, *pack it up and give it to them*.

Has a niece or nephew ever admired something in your house? Give it to them — they'll appreciate it.

It is much more rewarding to give things away now, while you're able to see the joy they bring to your family and friends, rather than just have things disposed of when you're gone.

Useful items of little monetary value can be donated to Goodwill or any number of great charities, and you get the satisfaction of knowing that your items are getting a second life.

If you choose to work with Serene Transitions, I'll deliver to the donation center free of charge and get you a donation receipt for your taxes.

### **The Trash Bin**

If you don't need it, nobody else wants it, and it can't be sold, it is trash.



If you're not up against a deadline, you can put small amounts of trash out every week with your regular trash pickup. If you need a dumpster, these run close to \$500. You can also call a junk hauler to remove stuff from your house. Again, Serene Transitions can help coordinate trash removal.

### **"What If I Need It Later?"**

When you're working your way through your room, consider the following questions: Have you used the item in the past year? In the past five years? If not, it's likely time to get rid of it.

Many people are reluctant to get rid of belongings because they think they might use them later, but that's not as helpful as it seems.

Let's say you reduced your kitchen to just the everyday essentials, auctioned off the rest, and made \$500. A couple months later the grandkids come over and want waffles, but you sold your waffle maker. Okay then, you go out and buy a new one for \$50 — you're still ahead \$450 — or you make pancakes instead, and your kitchen is much more pleasant to eat in without all the clutter!

### **Working with Serene Transitions**

Serene Transitions offers Compassionate Decluttering and Move Management Services for Seniors. I'd love to work with you if you're looking for conscientious and compassionate transition help for yourself, your parents, or other family members. If you have questions about the services I offer or decluttering in general, [please reach out!](#)

When you work with me, you get the final say in what you keep and what you get rid of — you're in full control of what stays and what goes. Each item you own has a memory attached, and I know that decluttering and moving can bring up a lot of emotions. Everything Serene Transitions does is empathetic, patient, and client-focused.

I love to take over tasks/projects that may be stressful for you, like decluttering and moving, so that you can focus on living your life to the fullest.

If you've started decluttering on your own, I'd be excited to hear from you about how the process went — what's the most surprising thing you've found amidst your "stuff"? Did the four bin method work for you? Have you noticed a difference in how you feel in your decluttered space?

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