

# Jump-Start Spring Cleaning

Yes – in winter by John Odalen

The calendar may still say winter, but spring will be here before you know it. Do you look forward to annual spring cleaning or dread it? Or just skip it all together? There is no need to feel overwhelmed. Who says you have to clean your entire home in one day or weekend, or even that you have to wait for spring to get started? The job will be easier if you break it up into small manageable chunks. Here are six easy places to get started:

## HOLIDAY DECORATIONS

The end of the season is a great time to sort, review, and purge before you pack everything away. Think back to when you decorated your home. Did you buy new decorations this year? Have you not used certain ones in a few years? Is something out of style? Broken? Now is the ideal time to purge unused items and downsize your inventory to what you actually use, instead of packing everything away with the intent to deal with it next year. By doing so you will immediately gain some storage space and make decorating next year much easier since you won't have to sort through unused items to find what you really need. If you need to replace anything, you can plan accordingly, whether it is to take advantage of an after season clearance sale, or shop off-season instead of waiting until next year when everything will be full price.



## WARDROBE

Before you pack away your winter clothes, spend an hour reviewing your wardrobe. Are there items you didn't wear this year? Anything that is ripped, stained or torn? No longer fits? Decide to only keep the items you truly love, that fit well and look good on you. Picking an outfit in the morning will be much easier. You can donate any clothing in good condition to a local charity and get a tax deduction. And if you need to add or replace pieces in your wardrobe, make a list so you can shop after-season sales now or be ready next year when the time comes.

## TOILETRIES, MAKEUP AND MEDICINE

Go through everything in your medicine chest, bathroom



closet, vanity top and drawers, dresser tops and that one cabinet in the kitchen. Throw out anything that has expired. Beauty and personal care products that you haven't used in six months, consider tossing. There is a reason you haven't used them. And don't forget your toiletry travel bag. (Check out <http://www.takebackyourmeds.org/> on how to safely dispose of Rx medication.)

## KITCHEN PANTRY, FRIDGE AND FREEZER

Do you have expired food at the back of your kitchen cabinets or pantry? Specialty food you bought on a whim but you know you will never use? Or do you have a dozen cans of chicken stock or three jars of nutmeg because you keep buying not realizing what you have? Once you have purged what you no longer want, sort what is left and organize like items together, so you will be able to find what you need. After you work on the pantry, move to the refrigerator. Check the condiments, dips, spreads, marinades and salad dressings. Finally move to the freezer. Look for anything with freezer burn or that has been in there more than six months. Plan to use anything that is still good but nearing its end date. A few minutes spent organizing your food will save you time each day going forward. You'll be able to see (and use) everything you have.

## DESK/MAIL

You cannot do a deep clean until you clear off all the flat surfaces. Instead of moving the piles of paper and magazines and catalog to one side just to put them back, take few minutes to review. Sort into piles: need action, to file, toss/shred. You'll be surprised how large the last pile is. For magazines and catalogs, set limits on how many back issues you will keep. If you aren't ready to file, create a "to file" basket for only paperwork that needs saving. When you have some time, or when the basket fills up, commit to doing the filing.

## CLEANING PRODUCTS

Before you start your full-on spring cleaning, pull out all of your cleaning products and tools. Do you have everything you need? Take this opportunity to use what you have before buying new. Clean or change the filters on the vacuum. When you have finished, evaluate anything you haven't used, or items that don't work effectively. Be brutal and toss what you do not need or will never use.

*John Odalen, Professional Organizer at Organize and Maintain, and author of "Real Value: New Ways to Think About Your Time, Your Space and Your Stuff."*