

Declutter your home in a day...

...a weekend, or even just minutes

Whether you have a couple of days or just a few minutes to spare, there's something you can do to make your home more festive and less frenzied in the run-up to Christmas

If you're planning your big declutter for November

TAKES A WEEKEND Get organised well in advance and carry out a few essential home improvements by setting aside one weekend in November to make your house spick-and-span. Try these buys and ideas.

See things clearly

Identify your visible clutter hotspots. 'Walk around your house and try to view it as a stranger would,' says Anita Richardson of property styling company, House Wow. 'We get used to our surroundings and stop seeing them as others do.' Tidy away piles of clothes and shoes, file any stray paperwork, and clear your surfaces.

Revamp a room

You still have plenty of time for a home makeover, so if you've been intending to clear out and revamp a living room, kitchen or guest room, book a decorator now. Tradespeople will be busy in the run-up to Christmas, so get a date in the diary as soon as you can.

To find someone local, visit paintingdecoratingassociation.co.uk, ratedpeople.com, decoratorlocator.co.uk, or go to dulux.co.uk to view a list of Dulux's approved professionals.

Order new furniture

If you need new storage furniture, order now. 'Christmas is a busy time for couriers and storage is often made to order, so leave about six weeks for delivery,' says Simon Glanville, Managing Director of Store.

Buy gifts as you go

Create some space to tidy away presents as you buy them. 'I advocate one big buying blitz,' says Naomi Saunders from decluttering company Clearly Organised. 'It saves time and is ultimately less stressful. Only spread buying over a few weeks if you know you'll have time.'

Check your supplies

Spend an hour of one day collecting together last year's Christmas leftovers. 'Gather up unused cards, crackers and wrapping paper,' says professional declutterer Sue Kay, owner of No More Clutter and author of *Hoarder To Order* (£9.99, Hodder Arnold). 'You'll save money and clutter as you won't buy so much.' After the festivities, store them all together for next year.

Christmas decorations box, from £13, Store



Store Christmas paper and tags in the Giftwrap Storage Bag, £14.99, KTWO

If you haven't started until December

TAKES A DAY When you've left it a bit later than planned, don't despair. You can make a dent in the clutter mound in just one day. The key is to concentrate your efforts in the right places.

Sorting out the sleeping areas of the house will help you feel in control and ready for the mix of extra people and presents. Planning where your decorations will go could save time in the week before Christmas.

Reduce your stock

Go through your wardrobes and clear them of bulky coats or evening dresses to make more room for guests or everydaywear.

'Most people have a place where they tend to stash their party clothes,' says No More Clutter's Sue Kay. 'Take all these things out of the wardrobe, try them on and if you know you're not going to wear them again, give them to a charity shop. That way you've done a good turn and cleared some space at the same time.'

Squash down any bulky, larger items such as coats and towels, as well as unseasonal clothes, to



Above and right Clever storage solutions rescued Jo's books from behind the sofa and transformed her family's living room, helping to make it feel more cosy in time for Christmas

'Our revamp was only just finished in time'

Declutterer Jo Jacob, 38, and husband Steve, 37, from Petersfield, Hampshire, started organising their living room in September last year. They finished just in time for Christmas.

'We'd given our living room a makeover to make it seem cosier, and we were also keen to add some proper storage for all our books.'

'As part of my decluttering business, Benella Interiors, I offer an unpacking service, but for the three years we'd been here, all our books had been sitting in boxes behind the sofa. There was just nowhere to put them, so we decided to have some bespoke shelves made. They were delivered three days before Christmas, and we spent the next two nights frantically painting them. Because we have two children – Ben, 10, and Eleanor, four – we could only really do the decorating at night. Both nights I was up until 1am, trying to get them finished. Steve came home on Christmas Eve to find me putting the books out, even though the shelves were still slightly tacky – but they did look lovely for Christmas.'

Call Benella Interiors on 07703 218905; benellainteriors.co.uk



a fraction of their original size with vacuum bags. Put the bags into underbed boxes or up in the loft to keep them out of the way. Try Vac Pack airtight storage bags, £9.99, from JML.

Clear out older children's wardrobes, too

Don't limit your clearance to your own wardrobe. If you have adult children away studying or working who'll be returning for Christmas, take this opportunity to clear their wardrobe while they're not around. Only keep things you know they can't live

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Streamline your clothing

You don't have to empty your wardrobes completely for guests. 'Just make sure there's a spare drawer and some hanging space,' says Beverly Wade from professional decluttering company, Cluttergone. 'Don't forget to find a home for suitcases, too.'

Maximise your storage with hanging organisers and multi-hangers, and fold things neatly to create more space. If your wardrobes are crammed full, a clothes rail or valet stand will give you extra hanging space.



Double clothes valet, £34.95, The Cotswold Company



Multishirt hanger, £9, The Holding Company



Extendable wheeled garment rack, £179, The Holding Company