



**Decluttering your home is no laughing matter, but when you make the process a game, motivation follows. Here's how to get yourself—and your entire family—into the organizing groove.**

**BY STACEY FREED PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARTY BALDWIN**



“Pair up to pare down. Enlisting someone else to help you is always more fun than going it alone.”

—LESLIE JOSEL, PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZER

#### GETTING RID OF CLUTTER

is so good for you. It helps you feel more focused and less stressed. Research even shows that people sleep better in tidier bedrooms. With so many reasons to go for it, what’s stopping you from just getting organized, once and for all?

Let’s face it, as good as the end results feel, the actual organizing can feel like a chore. And when you add in the attitudes of a partner and kids, the obstacles to a clutter-free life can seem unscalable. This is the moment when some understanding of motivation can jump-start and then fuel your long-term organizing efforts.

Directed motivation gives you a reason why you’re doing something, while also helping you visualize the outcome. As Gretchen Rubin, author of *Outer Order, Inner Calm* and host of the *Happier* podcast, points out, “Someone may want to take action but not be motivated,”

so nothing happens. Rather than becoming frustrated with yourself and others, “Think about why people don’t want to do something and the ways in which they would be more likely to do something,” Rubin says.

At this point, you may be thinking “Bring on the rewards!” But before you promise a chocolate bar, a cocktail, or an extra half-hour of screen time, realize that a reward really only works once. “If you want to create a lifelong habit, it’s not about this one-time effort.” You need to visualize a meaningful outcome (getting everyone out the door in the morning, on time, with all their gear in hand) and combine it with doable actions that you don’t dread.

If this sounds like classic “shift your perspective” advice, you’re correct. Why do we like playing sports or video games, dancing, pretending, reading, crafting? Because all these activities are fun, and we like how we feel when we’ve chosen to spend our time this way. Ready to let the good times (OK, *better times*) roll? Read on.







## 8 Ways to Make Organizing More Like a Game

Take the dread out of tidying up with one or more of our favorite energizing approaches from professional organizers.

### ADD CHANCE AND A LITTLE STRATEGY

Look to classic board games for inspiration. Leaving the specifics of the assignments to chance frees up everyone to just finish the game/task. For example, a rewritable spinner, *below*, can randomly assign each member of your home to a space in need of decluttering. Then have them roll dice to determine how many items to edit out by the end of the session. Another option: Fill out a blank bingo card with organizing tasks and aim to get five in a row in an hour. You can also try Las Vegas-based lifestyle blogger Anissa Orsino's free Declutter Bingo Card, available at [mamagoesbeyond.com](http://mamagoesbeyond.com), for a ready-made option.

### FEEL THE BEAT

"Music helps us motivate, plan, and initiate. It gives us energy and structure," says Leslie Josel, a parenting and student coach and founder of Order Out of Chaos in the New York City metro area. Try the approach she recommends for kids and teens who'd rather curl up with a

phone: Put on a song and challenge yourself to see how many things you can put in a box or clear from your desk before the song is over. Before the second chorus, you'll likely find yourself standing up, moving around, even bustin' a few moves. "Let yourself have a dance party to infuse fun into the project," Josel says. After the song ends, assess your progress and attitude. Can you keep organizing for one more song? How about two?

### FOCUS ON TIME

Everyone will get involved in organizing if the end of the task is clear and simple. "Set a timer for 10 minutes (or whatever amount makes sense for you and your family) and try to get as many tasks done before the timer goes





off,” says certified professional organizer and master trainer Diane Quintana, co-owner of Release, Repurpose, Reorganize, based in Atlanta. Or try this variation on time-based gamification: Assign a decluttering task and offer to time the process. The results don’t really matter, but when you write the results on a dry-erase board, everyone will up their efforts.

#### SET UP A CLUTTER ZONE

If you don’t know where to begin in a clutter space, establish a spot where clutter can temporarily reside. “Putting some items on a sled or in a Hula-Hoop puts parameters on the clutter and makes it easier to work on,” says Josel. An added benefit? A sled is mobile, so you can cart the items you no longer need down the hall and out of your home—and life.

#### TAKE THE LONG VIEW

The 30-Day Minimalism Game is a bit more challenging, so try this one with a good friend. On the first day of the month, get rid of one thing; the second day, two things; and so on. The going may get tough by mid-month, but whoever goes the longest wins. And if you go all the way, you’ll get rid of 465 items!

#### LEAN INTO THE COLOR WHEEL

Rainbows just feel good, so set up color-coded organizing systems where it will help sort things, such

as arranging art supplies like colored pencils or papers in ROY-G-BIV order in a multisection caddy or on a shelf; or arrange your sweaters in order of hue. Are you smiling yet?

#### GO ON A TREASURE HUNT

Hide a prize or encouraging note in a kid’s or partner’s messy closet. Make it like an Easter egg hunt, “but avoid prizes that will add to the clutter,” Beattie says.

#### CREATE A DREAM ROOM

A vision of the ending is essential to jump-starting the beginning, so start a Pinterest board or go old-school and clip images of what your ideal garage (or home office or pantry) will look like. As an added benefit, you’ll look beyond your current space and uncover which items truly speak to your heart and soul. Those are the keepers; everything else you can let go.

#### PICK A CARD, ANY CARD

Shuffle your way to an organized home with this deck of color-coded cards that address clutter in every room of your home. Designed by Diane Quintana and Jonda Beattie, the cards offer quick and easy organizing tasks. Fan out the deck, select a card, and receive a random assignment. Deal a card to everyone in your family and have them complete a task on the card. Working with kids or a skeptical partner? Curate the cards ahead of time to match skill or interest level. “Even people who are passionate list-makers enjoy the cards because they make your organizing efforts more engaging,” Beattie says. **TO BUY:** Organize Your Home 10 Minutes at a Time Cards, \$20; [releaserepurpose.com](https://releaserepurpose.com)

