

## **21 Tips To Help Kids Conquer Clutter (These tips can help adults, too)**

1. Cleaning their rooms involves making decisions. The more you help to simplify the room, the easier the cleaning and the decision-making becomes.
2. Check out books from the library, and buy only the ones your children really love. Why spend money on books they'll never read?
3. If toys, books, puzzles and games don't have a happy home that the child can reach easily to put away, then, you've got clutter.
4. Help them get drawers and the closet to a state where they can easily fit their clothes and other belongings into them without pushing or shoving.
5. Make it easy to keep clothes neat. Put shoe boxes without lids in drawers to help keep clothes from getting jumbled. Maybe socks in one shoe box, underwear in another. You can use any kind of container, but if you are a true Clutter Glutton, you still have every shoe box that has ever entered your home, so you may as well use them.
6. Put a large container (box or basket) on the closet floor for shoes, flip flops and slippers. Another one for sports equipment, art supplies, Barbie dolls or whatever.
7. Provide containers for different toys. When they don't know where to put things, it's hard to keep clutter under control. Make it easy to put toys, clothes and other items away.
8. Let children help label containers (they will be more open to using them) They can be as creative as they want with the labels -- either with writing or drawing pictures. Or take photos of the child showing what goes in each container. Encourage them to "ham it up", to hold the toy up to his face and exaggerate pointing to where it goes like we see in commercials. Have fun with it, and your child will be more open to making the system work.
9. Put clothes hampers (or baskets or boxes) in each child's room. Any dirty clothes not in the hamper don't get washed.
10. When your child receives new toys, help them select old ones to clean up and donate to a local charity. Children love the feeling of helping others.

11. Some children have an extra twin bed in their room “for sleepovers.” But most friends know to bring a sleeping bag and pillow when they sleep over. Space is too valuable to waste on a spare bed that just collects clutter on it. Unless the extra bed is used frequently, sell it or give it away to someone who will use it, and free up some space in your child’s room. Two options that do not use up floor space are:
  - a trundle bed where the mattress stores under the bed.
  - a bunk bed, but the extra bed could still become a magnet for clutter.
12. Clear off furniture tops in the room so visual space is open, clear and clean.
13. Set up a box or plastic bag in a permanent spot, such as a closet or the garage. Encourage your children to contribute items to the donation container that you’ve set up for the family. When the bags are full, donate them to your favorite charity.
14. Teach children to keep asking themselves, “Why keep broken toys, tired stuffed animals, books with torn pages or covers, games with broken or missing pieces?” Especially if they are no longer interested in these things.
15. To simplify the children’s laundry, try assigning a separate “signature” color to each child for towels, sheets and blankets.
16. Roommates handle their shared space better if a parent or someone helps to establish clear boundaries. This is Meghan’s drawer and this is Cassidy’s drawer; or this is Connor’s shelf, this is Noah’s shelf. And so on. Sometimes labels are needed to help keep things straight.
17. When helping them de-clutter, give children the opportunity to decide what stays and what goes. If they can get rid on only a few things at first, let it be. Let them see how you’re getting rid of your stuff.
18. If the family is working together to de-clutter one area, have a big celebration when it’s clear or a mini-celebration after one solid hour of work.

19. Too many toys, puzzles and books? Pack some away to be brought out

- when a babysitter comes
- for a long car ride
- on a rainy day
- when visiting children have left your child feeling used and abused
- on a sick day
- when your child just needs a "spirit lifter"

20. Don't give space to games no one likes or games with broken or missing pieces. Help your children (teens need help too) to de-clutter but let them make choices. Then teach them to cultivate simple habits to help them maintain a clutter free environment.

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