

Life & Times

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10 GREAT WAYS TO AVOID BACK-TO-SCHOOL CLUTTER

The new school year is always stressful, so don't let back-to-school clutter make matters worse. Here are ways to cut down on clutter chaos.

How can you avoid annual back-to-school clutter and make everyone less depressed and stressed?

Andrew Mellen, author of *Unstuff Your Life!*, offers his organizational holy trinity:

•**Designate a home for everything.** Every backpack, skirt, homework assignment must have its own place. Get

the kids in the habit of placing everything where it belongs.

•**Place like with like.** All pencils go in one bin; permission slips in one envelope; coats on the same row of hooks.

•**Something in; something out.** When you buy something new, you get rid of something old. No exceptions!



Here are more ways to escape back-to-school clutter.

1. Make a list. Impulse buying is deadly when shopping for school clothes, supplies, field trips, and sports stuff. Take an inventory, make a list of must-haves, and follow it exactly. If it's not on the list, don't buy it.

2. Unpack immediately. Don't pile up shopping bags full of supplies. Unpack and organize as soon as you bring the bags into the house. That way, you'll avoid day-before-school chaos.

3. Create a Mommy/Daddy binder. Geralin Thomas, a pro organizer featured on A&E's show "Hoarders," says parents should make for themselves a three-ring binder that contains kids' immunization records, lists of active medications, pediatrician telephone numbers — the information they refer to and write on forms frequently during the school year.

4. Establish a homework zone. Kids' rooms, dining room table, kitchen counter — just pick a place. Stock the spot with

bins, jars, or rolling caddies with school supplies — pens, papers, glue sticks — so kids don't have to hunt for what they need.

5. Color-code your kids. Assign each child a color: Billy's blue, Mary's red. Buy basics — binders, towels, toothbrushes, slippers — in those colors for easy sorting and cleanup.

6. Pick a staging spot. This is where kids put their ready-to-go backpacks each night before bed. In the morning, they just grab and go.

7. Give each child a sports bin. A place in the mudroom or entryway where each kid can put their kneepads, helmets, ballet shoes — all the equipment they need for lessons, practices, and games. Also, tape a checklist for each sport above each bin; i.e., Baseball: cleats, mitt, bat, hat. That way, kids won't forget what they need.

8. Update the family calendar. Update your trusty wall calendar daily. Make sure your schedule is on the calendar too, so kids know when you're available for conferences and carpools.

9. Digitize the family calendar. Your computer calendar has digital features that can keep everyone on schedule. Sync the computer calendar with cell phones so everyone knows where they need to be.

10. Sign and return permission slips immediately. If slips hang around, they become clutter and disappear. Get in the habit of signing & returning the next day.

By Lisa Kaplan Gordan

In This Issue

Moving Day Survival Kit	2
Repair Kitchen Counters	2
Reduce Your Home Gas Bill	3
Air Force Couple-Foster Pets	3
Link Between Clutter & Depression	4
Hard Water Stains Remedy	5
Recipe-Grandma's Swedish Meatballs	5
Today's Laugh	5
Kids Corner-Cardboard Marble Maze	5
Reasons to Hire a Real Estate Pro	6
California Home Sales Facts-July 2018	7
Congratulations-Nate & Nicole B.	7
Congratulations-Joseph G.	7
September Birthday's & Anniversaries	7
Monthly Drawing	8
FREE Home Value Report	8
Giving Back 4 Homes Program	8
Giving Back 4 Homes Contact	8

FREE
 MONTHLY DRAWING

See Page 8
 For Details

MOVING-DAY SURVIVAL KIT

Pack these items in your car on moving day to make life a little easier:

- Drinks and Snacks in a cooler.
- Mealtime Must-Haves like paper towels, disposable plates, utensils.
- Bathroom Basics including toilet paper, soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, towel.
- Change of Clothes and a plastic bag for laundry.
- Important Documents such as medical records, passports, lease agreements, etc.
- Handy Extras like a flashlight, tool kit, matches, scissors, pencils, trash bags.



REPAIR KITCHEN COUNTERS

You can repair kitchen counter mishaps with only a little time and money. Big boo-boos, however, will need professional help.

Granite

Even granite counters suffer kitchen wear and tear. But you can make them shine with a little time and know-how. After you fix them, don't forget to reseal them.

Cracks, chips, scratches: Fill nicks in granite by building up layers of epoxy resin colored to match the stone. Clean the area first with acetone, which breaks down grease. Be sure to open a window for ventilation.

Stains: The type of stain--wine or ink, oil or bleach--determines the type of poultice you'll need to suck it out. A paste of flour and hydrogen peroxide pulls out grease, oil, bleach, and ink stains; a mix of flour and bleach cleans wine stains. If you want to go commercial, check out Alpha, Aqua Mix, and StoneTech stone cleaners. Cost: \$6 to \$20.



Solid surface counters

Solid surface countertops, such as Corian, are man-made from resin, acrylic, and other materials. They're tough but not impervious to scratches and stains. To repair minor scratches, rub a white polishing compound on the area with a wool pad, then apply a countertop wax.

For deeper scratches or cuts, call a professional. Figure labor costs at about \$15 to \$35 an hour. If you need to replace portions of the counter, figure at least \$35 to \$65 per sq foot.

Laminate

Fixing gouges or covering burns in laminate is tough for mortals,

though repairing minor problems is doable.

- Fix small chips with laminate repair paste that matches the color of the countertop.
- Cover scratches with countertop polish or car wax.
- Fix peeling laminate with contact cement applied to both surfaces and pressed back into place.
- Remove coffee and tea stains with vinegar or a paste of baking soda and household cleaner.

Bigger problems will require replacing the damaged stretch. Laminate comes in a billion colors, but finding an exact match for an old counter could be difficult.

To get the look you want, replace the counter. Labor will cost \$15 to \$35 per hour; countertops range from \$3/linear ft. for Plain Jane straight-edged laminates to \$100/linear ft. for laminates with a beveled edge that look like granite.

Tile

If you've planned ahead and stockpiled old tiles, then grab a few and replace cracked or scratched areas. If you don't have extra tile, then attempt the following first aid:

- Wipe away scratches with a dab of toothpaste on a clean cloth.
- Work epoxy glue into cracks with a toothpick, then color with matching oil-based artist paint.
- Remove old grout with a utility knife, then replace with a rubber trowel.

Stainless steel

Stainless steel countertops become scratched, stained, and dull over time. While you'll never completely remove scratches, you can buff them by massaging with vegetable oil.

Remove stains with a paste of baking soda and dish soap.

Source: Jane Hoback

REDUCE YOUR HOME GAS BILL

The simplest way to lower your natural gas bill is to use less gas. Here are some tips on how to reduce your heating costs:

- Turn down your thermostat 5 to 10 degrees while you are away or asleep. (Every degree above 68 adds about 3 to your heating bill.)
- Turn down your water heater temperature to 120 or 125.
- Place window film on the interior of leaky or drafty windows.
- Have your furnace and water heater professionally cleaned and inspected.
- Change furnace filters monthly.
- Replace your old furnace with a new, efficient model.
- Caulk and weather-strip around doors and windows.
- Vacuum heat registers and return air vents regularly.
- Make sure furniture and draperies do not block heat flow.
- Keep curtains open when the sun is shining.
- Add more attic insulation.
- Call your utility about having a home energy audit.

Source: Michelle Konefsky, www.southjerseyhomeexpert.com



THIS AIR FORCE COUPLE FOSTERS PETS, YOU CAN TOO

Whether they are kept for a few weeks or a lifetime, sheltered animals around the nation rely on dedicated and caring individuals that can help them find a home.

To ensure these animals receive the support they need, U.S. Air Force Capt. Daniel Hale, 563rd Operation Support Squadron officer in charge of plans and scheduling, and his wife Dr. Kristen Hale, veterinarian, decided to take on the responsibilities that comes with fostering rescue animals.

"When I worked emergency, Squish came in at four-weeks-old after sustaining injuries from being trapped under a couch," Dr. Hale said. "We decided to take him in as a foster and he's been with us ever since."

After adopting Squish into their family, the Hales continued to foster companion animals. In the past three years, the couple has fostered over 20 sheltered pets.

Unfortunately, not all fostered pets in the care of the Hales are immediately adopted by families due to the medical condition of the animals.

"A lot of the pets we take in require specific medical needs," Dr. Hale said. "Without a foster family to give them the individual attention they need, many of the animals would have never found homes because they would have been put down."

Thanks to the help of local rescue shelters, foster families don't have to

worry about [paying](#) for the medical expenses of the animals while the rescue pet is in the family's care.

Because of the nature of some of these medical conditions, the time it takes to nurse the animals to full health can vary.

"We've had animals anywhere from three days to six weeks," Capt. Hale said. "After we've made sure they are ready to be adopted, we get them as much exposure as we can through local rescue shelters to increase their chances of finding a family."

Because of the efforts of families like the Hales, shelter adoption rates have steadily climbed over the years leading to fewer overcrowded facilities.

According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, adoption rates have risen roughly 18 percent from 2011 to 2017 and shelter animal euthanasia rates have decreased approximately 42 percent.



"If you can't keep an animal around for long or are not ready to make the commitment to permanently care for a pet, you can still make a difference by providing them with a foster home," Dr. Hale said.

To find out more information on fostering and adopting companion animals, visit your local animal shelters.

Source: Air Force News By Frankie Moore

LINK BETWEEN CLUTTER AND DEPRESSION

Clutter is a bummer — literally. New study shows a link between depression and amount of stuff in your home.

Dishes in the sink, toys throughout the house, stuff covering every flat surface; this clutter not only makes our homes look bad, it makes us feel bad, too.

At least that's what researchers at UCLA's Center on Everyday Lives and Families (CELf) discovered when they explored in real time the relationship between 32 California families and the thousands of objects in their homes. The resulting book, *Life at Home in The Twenty-First Century*, is a rare look at how middle-class Americans use the space in their homes and interact with the things they accumulate over a lifetime.

It turns out that clutter has a profound affect on our mood and self-esteem. CELf's anthropologists, social scientists, and archaeologists found:

A link between high cortisol (stress hormone) levels in female home owners and a high density of household objects. The more stuff, the more stress women feel. Men, on the other hand, don't seem bothered by mess, which accounts for tensions between tidy wives and their clutter bug hubbies.

Women associate a tidy home with a happy and successful family. The more dishes that pile up in the sink, the more anxious women feel.

Even families that want to reduce clutter often are emotionally paralyzed when it comes to sorting and pitching objects. They either can't break sentimental

attachments to objects or believe their things have hidden monetary value.

Although U.S. consumers bear only 3% of the world's children, we buy 40% of the world's toys. And these toys live in every room, fighting for display space with kids' trophies, artwork, and snapshots of their last soccer game.

Although *Life At Home* documents the clutter problem, the book offers no solutions. But there are some simple things you can do to de-clutter your home and raise your spirits.

1. Adopt the Rule of 5. Every time you get up from your desk or walk through a room, put away five things. Or, each hour, devote 5 minutes to de-cluttering. At the end of the day, you've cleaned for an hour.

2. Pledge to clear and clean your kitchen sink every day. It takes a couple of seconds more to place a dish in the dishwasher than dump it in the sink. A clean sink will instantly raise your spirits and decrease anxiety.

3. Return to yesteryear when only photos of ancestors or weddings earned a place on a shelf. Put snapshots in a family album, which will immediately de-clutter many flat surfaces.

4. Unburden your refrigerator door. Researchers found a correlation between the number of items stuck to the fridge door and the amount of clutter throughout the house. Toss extra magnets, file restaurant menus, and place calendars in less conspicuous places.

5. Hack out unexpected new storage space in out-of-the-way places, like under the stairs.

6. Get inspired by creative de-cluttering ideas found on Pinterest.

7. Fill a box with items you don't love or use. Seal the box and place it in a closet. If you haven't opened the box in a year, donate it (unopened!) to charity.

Source: Lisa Kaplan Gordon



Hard Water Stains Remedy

Q: I have tried every remedy for getting rid of hard water stains and soap scum on my glass shower stall. Nothing seems to work! Any solutions?

Richard R.-Orinda, CA

A: The answer to your prayers is Pam Original Cooking Spray. Simply spray Pam on the shower glass, wait 10 minutes, then wash off the cooking spray with soapy water (a few drop of Dawn Dishwashing Liquid in a bucket of water). The canola oil and lecithin in the Pam Cooking Spray actually free the lime deposits and soap scum from the glass.

Source: Something Extra Magazine



Today's Laugh

MY KID CALLED ME AN OLD LADY
THIS MORNING. WE BOTH LAUGHED
AND LAUGHED...

THEN I CHANGED THE WIFI
PASSWORD.

MOMSGOTINK



Grandma's Swedish Meatballs

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 1/2 cup crushed saltines (about 10 crackers)
- 1/4 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 pound ground beef
- 1/2 pound Jones No Sugar Pork Sausage Rolls sausage
- 1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour, divided
- 2-1/2 cups reduced-sodium beef broth, divided
- Hot mashed potatoes



DIRECTIONS:

1. Mix first 4 ingredients. Add beef and sausage; mix lightly but thoroughly. Shape into 1-in. balls; toss with 1/4 cup flour, coating lightly.
2. In a large skillet, brown meatballs over medium-high heat. Add 2 cups broth; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, covered, until meatballs are cooked through, 5-6 minutes.
3. Remove meatballs with a slotted spoon. Mix the remaining flour and broth until smooth; add to pan. Bring to a boil; cook and stir until thickened, 1-2 minutes. Return meatballs to pan; heat through. Serve with mashed potatoes.

Source: Taste of Home

Cardboard Marble Maze

NEEDED

- Shallow Cardboard Box
- Straws
- Scissors
- Pencil
- Hot Glue gun
- Wooden beads, blocks, spool
- Small Marble
- Paint (Optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Paint box if desired. Have child draw out a maze in pencil.
2. Cut straws and hot glue onto the penciled maze.
3. Use wooden pieces to act as stoppers.
4. To play: use marble and drive it around your newly constructed maze



Source: Hello Wonderful, Agnes Hsu

A+ Reasons To Hire A Real Estate Professional



Paperwork

They help with all disclosures & paperwork necessary in today's heavily regulated environment.



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They are well educated in and experienced with the entire sales process.



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Understanding of Current Market Conditions

They simply & effectively explain today's real estate headlines & decipher what they mean to you.



KEEPING CURRENT MATTERS

CALIFORNIA HOME SALES FACTS: JULY 2018

State/Region/County	July 2018	June 2018	MTM% Chg
Calif. State Average	\$591,460	\$602,760	-1.9%
Calif. Condo Average	\$486,330	\$482,930	+0.7%
Sacramento	\$370,000	\$375,000	-1.3%
Placer	\$495,000	\$510,000	-2.9%
El Dorado	\$504,000	\$525,000	-4.0%
Contra-Costa	\$680,000	\$702,373	-3.2%
San Francisco	\$1,650,000	\$1,620,000	+1.9%
Santa Clara	\$1,351,000	\$1,400,000	-3.5%
Solano	\$454,000	\$450,000	+0.9%

State/Region/County	July 2018	June 2018	MTM% Chg
Los Angeles	\$597,520	\$586,090	+2.0%
Orange County	\$829,000	\$835,500	-0.8%
Riverside	\$408,000	\$405,000	+0.7%
San Diego	\$650,000	\$650,000	+0.0%
Yolo	\$430,000	\$450,000	-4.4%
Fresno	\$280,000	\$275,500	+1.6%
San Joaquin	\$370,000	\$377,150	-1.9%
Stanislaus	\$325,000	\$320,000	+1.6%
Butte	\$315,000	\$323,000	-2.5%
Yuba	\$289,000	\$292,500	-1.2%

For Complete Report & All California Counties:
<http://www.givingback4homes.com/newsletter.html>



That's NOT a typo.
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SEPTEMBER

WISHING A HAPPY BIRTHDAY & HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO THE FOLLOWING:



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 KATIE P.

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 SABRINA R.
 TAMMY G.
 ROD & SABRINA R.

ZANE M.
 RIALYN J.
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MONTHLY DRAWING

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3rd Prize \$10 Starbucks Gift Card

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2nd Prize \$25 Red Robin Gift Card-Sarah H.
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