



The Less Mess Challenge

Spring 2023

The Less Mess Challenge is a home decluttering, cleaning, and organizing challenge that will take you through 10 spaces in your home over the course of ten weeks. In the following pages, you will find a checklist for each space. The checklist is broken down into three sections based on what you have the time and energy for:

A Little Less Mess: 30 minute speed decluttering & tidy

Less Mess: 60 minutes of decluttering, tidying, & surface cleaning

A Lot Less Mess: 2+ hours of deep cleaning, decluttering, & organization

Remember – even just spending a half an hour per week in a space is better than nothing.

This challenge is 10+ weeks long. The plus is for each additional child's bedroom you need to organize. If you don't have kids' rooms to organize, you're done in 9 weeks. If you have 4 kids' rooms, you may be working up to 13 weeks.

Throughout this document you will find several QR codes. Open the camera app on your phone and look at the code through your app. A link should appear on your screen. The QR codes link to additional resources on this topic.

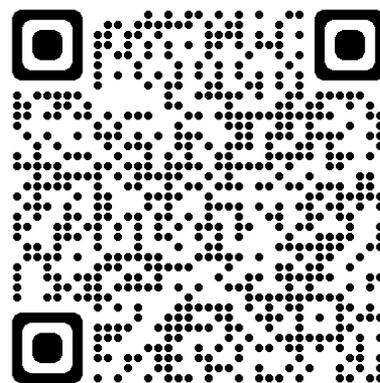
The last few pages of this document have extra lines for notes and ideas you have while organizing. Don't stop organizing to shop and don't get distracted from the challenge. Take note and follow up on your thoughts afterwards!



Week 1: Laundry & Linens

A Little Less Mess: Quick Declutter

- If you're behind on laundry, you won't be able to tackle it in just a half an hour, but don't let that stop you - throw a load in and fold another
- Clear the tops of the machines if they have anything on them
- Remove any items from this space that do not belong
- Remove any clean clothing from the space and put it away
- Tidy up the shelf or space where you keep your laundry containers.
- Empty your lint trap and garbage can.
- Dry dust all surfaces
- Do a quick check of your linen closet – can anything go?



Less Mess: Declutter & Surface Clean

- Do everything above, plus run a tub clean cycle (We use [Affresh Tabs](#) once a month)
- Remove items from the shelves, dust them, wipe up any spilled detergent, combine duplicate bottles to free up space, and replace the items neatly, keeping items you use most often the most accessible.
- Dust the tops of the machines.
- Vacuum the floor and in between the washer and dryer.
- Do a quick inventory of everything you have in the laundry room—remove any items that don't belong. Group like items and place nicely on shelves or in bins.
- Fold any towels or sheets nicely within your linen closet.

A Lot Less Mess: Declutter, Deep Clean & Organize

- Do everything above, plus clean out your dryer vent.
- Wipe out the gross stuff around the lip of the washer (and dryer, as needed)
- If you already have bins, remove everything, wipe them out and replace only what you actually need or want. If you don't have bins, consider adding some. Adjust labels, as needed. Laundry rooms are a great place to store household items such as batteries, extra cleaners, and lightbulbs - group like items together and label them.
- Remove all items from your linen closet. Replace only what you need, folded neatly. Consider containing smaller items in baskets.
- Clean light fixtures, baseboards, cabinets, etc.—laundry rooms are DUSTY—eliminate as much as you can.



Week 2: Kitchen

A Little Less Mess: Quick Declutter

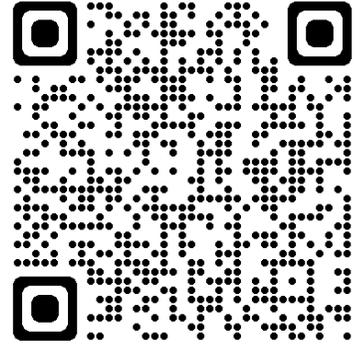
- Hit a few hot clutter spots such as food storage, utensils, pots and pans. Donate or toss anything in poor shape, without a match, or that you don't use.
- Do a quick fridge reset. Toss any old food. Give it a quick wipe.
- Do a quick pantry reset. Toss any expired food and empty boxes.
- Clear counters

Less Mess: Declutter & Surface Clean

- Do everything above plus...
- Choose 3-4 of your messiest drawers and/or cabinets and clean them out.
- Do a quick pass through/reset of all remaining cabinets. Tackle pain points.
- Wipe down the fronts of all appliances and inside the microwave
- Move items off the counter, wipe behind them, then put them back. Consider keeping as little as possible on the counter.

A Lot Less Mess: Declutter, Deep Clean, & Organize

- Go through each and every cabinet and drawer, emptying, cleaning, purging, and putting back only what is loved and used.
- Consider item placement. Are items where you use them? Are items used together placed close? Keep items you use frequently closer at hand. Less used items should be less convenient.
- Adjust shelf height, as needed. Waste as little vertical space as possible.
- Wipe down all cabinet fronts, handles, light fixtures, switches, windows, and backsplash.
- Pantry
 - Remove all food, wipe pantry shelves and clean the floor.
 - Sort all food by category.
 - Consider using bins and containers to group items and decant.
 - Put items back into the pantry in zones.
- Fridge/Freezer
 - Remove all food, shelves, and drawers from fridge and freezer
 - Wash all shelves/drawers in warm soapy water. Dry and return to the fridge.
 - Add fresh food back in, sorted in zones.
- Final touches: clean all appliances, wipe down counters, wipe baseboards, sweep/vacuum floor, mop.





Week 3: Mudroom & Coat Closet

A Little Less Mess: Quick Declutter

- Look through all jackets. Donate any that are too worn/small.
- Look through winter hats/gloves/scarves. Donate any that are too worn/small/don't have matches.
- Repeat this with shoes.
- Take out any items that don't belong and put them where they go.

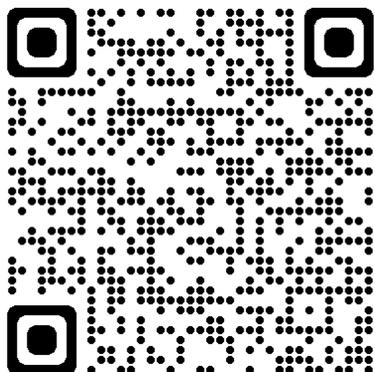
Less Mess: Declutter & Surface Clean

- Complete all tasks above, plus...
- Clear and sweep the coat closet and mudroom floor.
- Look through and empty out old purses, totes, backpacks, and diaper bags. Donate any that are no longer needed.
- If you have a bench space, clear it off.
- If you have bins in your coat closet, do a quick tidy and declutter.

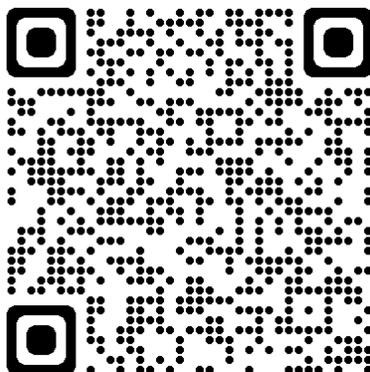
A Lot Less Mess: Declutter, Deep Clean, & Organize

- All tasks above, plus...
- Evaluate your space. What's causing the clutter? Find a solution for these items.
- Empty the space, wipe all shelves and benches. Mop the floor.
- Empty all bins, wipe them out, replace items thoughtfully.
- Move any items out that make more sense somewhere else in your home.
- Consider adding a command center, family schedule board, or mail sorter on the wall.

Make a Mudroom



Coat Closet Organization





Week 4: Dining Room & Living Room

A Little Less Mess: Quick Declutter

- Clear as many surfaces as possible, especially your dining room table
- Fold blankets and tidy pillows
- Evaluate any books, knickknacks, or anything else on shelves. Remove what you don't love.
- If you have a china cabinet or hutch, look through it and see if anything can go.

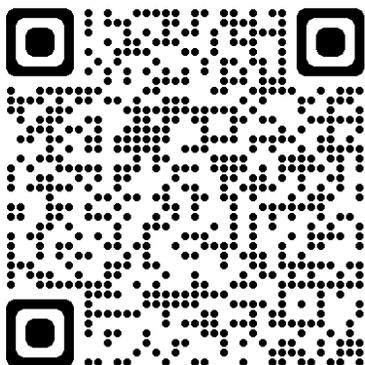
Less Mess: Declutter & Surface Clean

- Complete all tasks above, plus...
- Remove all items from shelves to dust. Return only what you love.
- Vacuum floors and couches.

A Lot Less Mess: Declutter, Deep Clean, & Organize

- All tasks above, plus...
- Touch every item and evaluate it.
- Living Room
 - Empty any storage bins, wipe them out, replace contents thoughtfully
 - Remove couch cushions and vacuum couches
 - Wash all throw blankets
- Dining Room
 - Go through all drawers and cabinets in your hutch
 - Consider letting go of China, alcohol, servingware, or linens you don't use or love
- Dust, wax, or polish all furniture
- Dust baseboards, trim, windowsills, fans, frames on the walls, and light fixtures
- Wash windows and curtains

Reducing visual clutter





Week 5: Playroom & Toys

A Little Less Mess: Quick Declutter

- Throw out or donate items that are cheap, broken, or obviously outgrown
- Do a quick tidy, returning items to their proper locations
- Fill a box of item you think your child may not love anymore

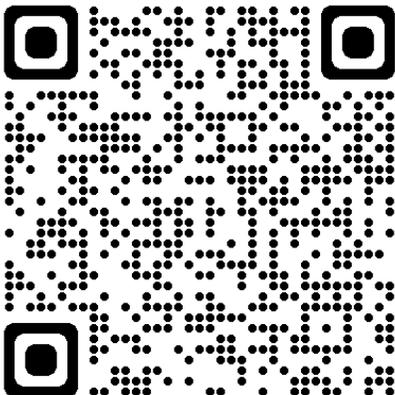
Less Mess: Declutter & Surface Clean

- Complete all tasks above, plus...
- Remove items from shelves, dust, and replace them neatly
- Remove items from toybox (if you have one), vacuum it, and replace what your kids love
- Move larger toys and vacuum under them. Move the toys back and vacuum.
- With your children or one your own, fill a box of toys they no longer need/want/love

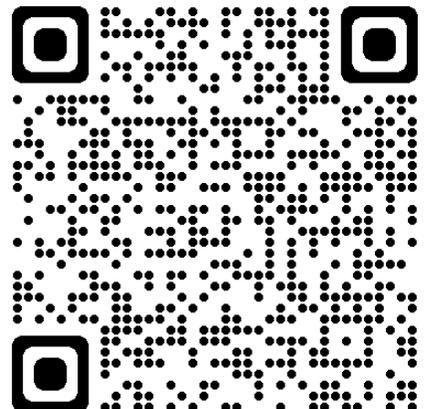
A Lot Less Mess: Declutter, Deep Clean, & Organize

- Gather all toys to one location, if possible. If this isn't possible, repeat this process in each area of the home where toys are kept. Evaluate everything. Box up anything kids don't love or have outgrown or just seems excessive. Throw out broken toys.
- Sort items you are keeping into similar categories. Consider purchasing bins shelves to contain them. Put each toy category in a bin and add a label.
- If you already have shelves and bins, take any bins off shelves and wipe shelves down. Empty all bins where toys are kept and wipe them out. Wipe down all toys and return them to bins. Return the bins to the shelves.
- Clean the room: vacuum, dust baseboards, wash windows, wipe light fixtures and switches
- If you've implemented a new system, explain your expectations to your children. Show them the labels and where items go. Be patient over the next few weeks. Be sure to leave extra time to tidy up and model how you expect them to do it.

Toys



Games





Week 6: Master Bedroom & Closet

A Little Less Mess: Quick Declutter

- Clear all surfaces (nightstand, dressers)
- Quickly look through drawers. Tidy piles/folding and pull out anything you know you don't love
- Remove items from this space that don't belong and put them in their rightful homes.
- Quickly tidy your closet by cleaning the floor, tidying piles, and straightening hangers.
- Change your sheets and make your bed

Less Mess: Declutter & Surface Clean

- Complete all tasks above, plus...
- Empty your nightstand drawers, vacuum them out, replace only what you need.
- Choose a few dresser drawers to empty out. Remove anything you don't love. Fold everything else neatly.
- Look through your closet. Remove anything you don't love, including shoes. Sort by weight and style. Clear the closet floor.
- Evaluate clutter. Is it caused by poor storage, too many items, or bad habits? Try and find a solution to this.
- Dust all surfaces and vacuum the floor

A Lot Less Mess: Declutter, Deep Clean, & Organize

- All tasks above, plus...
- Empty ALL drawers, purge, and fold nicely.
- Go through any other storage spaces (shelves, chests, etc.)
- Empty each rack and shelf of your closet. Carefully consider each item. Try items on, if necessary. Only keep what fits and what you love. Be ruthless.
- If you have bins, empty them, wipe them out, and replace contents thoughtfully.
- Make sure all shoes fit, are in good condition, and are still your style.
- Clean all baseboards, light fixtures, fans, lamp shades, switches, doors, and frames on walls.
- Wash windows and dust window sills.
- Wash all bedding and curtains. Vacuum your mattress.



Week 7: Bathrooms

A Little Less Mess: Quick Declutter

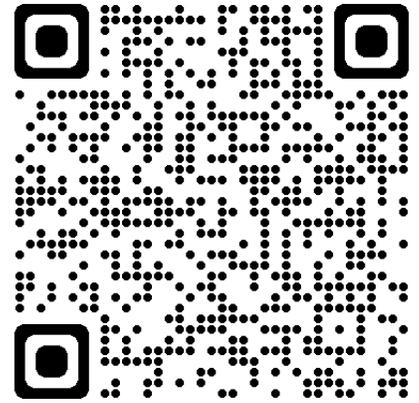
- Clear bathroom counters (every bathroom)
- Do a quick tidy of your messiest cabinet or drawer in each bathroom. Can anything go?
- Remove empty or extra bottles from the shower.
- Check expiration dates on medicines.
- Fold and stack towels nicely.
- Grab a fresh toothbrush if it's time.

Less Mess: Declutter & Surface Clean

- Complete all tasks above, plus...
- Empty drawers, wipe them out, and put back only what you need. Use dividers, if possible. Remember to use valuable real estate for the most used items.
- Empty your medicine cabinet, wipe shelves, and put back essentials.
- Empty your cabinet and assess whether you can better use your vertical space.
- If you're using bins, quickly look through them and check contents.
- Wipe surfaces and mirrors. Clean the toilets.

A Lot Less Mess: Declutter, Deep Clean, & Organize

- All tasks above, plus...
- Look through all the toiletries. If you aren't currently using bins, consider getting some. Group categories into each bin. If you need to use vertical space, choose bins with lids that stack.
- If you're already using bins, empty them out, clean them, sort through all items. Return bins to shelves.
- Go through your makeup. Toss what you don't love. Check expiration dates and replace old makeup you do love.
- Wipe down the cabinets. Clean the shower and tubs.
- Wash any rugs or curtains.
- Mop the floor
- Wash windows, dust baseboards, wipe down walls, doors, light fixtures, light switches, and window sills.

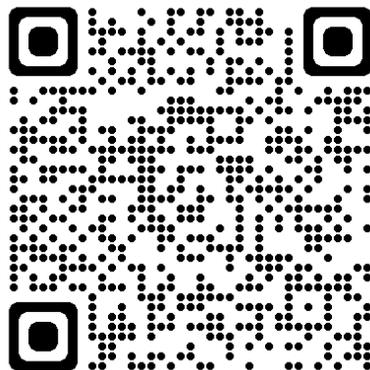




Week 8: Office & Paperwork

A Little Less Mess: Quick Declutter

- Before cleaning anything, assess the clutter. Assign a home or create a solution for any item that doesn't have one.
- Find your desk. Remove anything that doesn't belong. Simplify decor.
- Tidy any drawers.
- If you have a bulletin board or file folders, look through them quickly and remove any paper you're finished with. Shred or file any papers you don't need out.
- Clear any piles on the floor.



Less Mess: Declutter & Surface Clean

- Complete all tasks above, plus...
- Dust surfaces and screens. Blow off keyboards.
- Empty drawers, add dividers, if needed, refill drawers with intention.
- Evaluate, declutter, and tidy office supplies. Create bins for each category, if necessary.
- Consider adding shelves or a bulletin board for paper and other items you need handy. Go vertical as much as possible.
- Unsubscribe from 10 emails.
- Vacuum the floor.

A Lot Less Mess: Declutter, Deep Clean, & Organize

- All tasks above, plus...
- Empty ALL drawers, bins, shelves, etc. Go through each bin and reset. Update labels, if needed.
- Check your files. Remove anything old. Shred or recycle. Update labels, if needed. Create a 2023 Taxes folder if you haven't already.
- Wipe all surfaces.
- Clean all windows, windowsills, baseboards, fans, light fixtures, lamp shades, doors, and light switches.
- Jazz up your space with wallpaper, art, or a plant. Make it an enjoyable space to spend time in.



Week 9: Garage or Storage Room

A Little Less Mess: Quick Declutter

- Clear any obvious garbage (broken items, recycling, etc.)
- Look around for items that have “homes” and put them back where they go.
- Clear the floor as much as possible. Oftentimes the garage will have open space on a shelf for an item, but someone needs to actually put it there.
- Quickly look for 10 items that can be donated. Put them in a box and drop them off at Goodwill or schedule a donation pick up THIS WEEK.

Less Mess: Declutter & Surface Clean

- Complete all tasks above, plus...
- If you have existing shelves, straighten them up.
- If you have existing bins, grab a few that aren't used often and quickly look through them. Dispose of any items you no longer need.
- If you don't have shelves, grab a plastic set that goes together in minutes from Home Depot. Throw a few items on them. Link →
- Sweep or blow out the garage.



A Lot Less Mess: Declutter, Deep Clean, & Organize

- All tasks above, plus...
- Remove all items from shelves, wipe items down and wipe shelves down.
- Look through existing bins. Consider adding bins for smaller like-items if you don't already have them.
- Place items you use most often in the easiest to reach places.
- Sort items into zones on shelving throughout the space (ex: sports, beach, holiday, tools, lawn and garden, etc.)
- If you have any lockers, toolboxes, or other storage cases, look through them and clean.
- Add labels to anything that needs a label.
- Remove as much as possible from the floor. Purchase hooks and shelves, if necessary.
- ACTUALLY donate items you need to donate!



Week 10+: Kids' Bedrooms

A Little Less Mess: Quick Declutter

- Throw away any obvious garbage or broken toys.
- Change sheets, if necessary, and make the bed. While you're thinking about sheets, how many do you have for each child? Can a set or two go?
- Pull everything out from under the bed. Does it all belong?
- Clear the tops of surfaces (nightstand, dresser, desk, etc.)
- Clear the floor.
- Quickly put items in their homes. If you can't do this quickly, neither can your child. It's time to rethink your systems or declutter this space.

Less Mess: Declutter & Surface Clean

- Complete all tasks above, plus...
- Quickly look through dresser drawers and tidy them. Pull out anything that's too small. Clear out anything under the dresser and dust the top.
- Tidy the closet. Look through clothing and pull out anything that's too small. Clear the floor.
- Tidy and dust any shelves.
- Vacuum the floor.

A Lot Less Mess: Declutter, Deep Clean, & Organize

- All tasks above, plus...
- Wash all bedding and fabrics (comforters, blankets, shams, curtains)
- Empty each drawer of the dresser one by one. Make sure everything fits, is in good shape, and is folded nicely before returning it. Also make sure those items make sense where you're putting them. Can your kids reach the clothing they need the most?
- Go through the nightstand and tidy it.
- Fully empty the closet. Sort items into categories and return them to the shelf neatly. Use bins, if necessary. Add labels.
 - A "Too Small" and "Too Big" bin are always good ideas for children's closets.
- Go through desk drawers and assess every item. Toss wrinkled papers, candy wrappers, old markers, broken crayons... you get the idea.
- Look through any toys. Create a treasure box for special items they can't let go of.
- Clean baseboards, fan, windowsills, doors, light fixtures, switches, and windows.



Notes & Ideas

Use the space below to jot down notes, future ideas, or items you need to shop for. Do not shop when you're mid-organizing!

Laundry Room & Linen Closet: _____

Kitchen: _____

Mudroom/ Coat Closets: _____

Dining/Living Room: _____

Playroom & Toys: _____

Master Bedroom & Closet: _____

Bathrooms: _____

Office/Papers: _____

Garage/Storage Room: _____

Kids' Bedrooms: _____

