

The Organised Cook

Decluttering Your Kitchen Checklist

A practical, pressure-free kitchen reset

Your kitchen does not need to be perfect.

A kitchen can quietly become one of the busiest places in the home. Duplicate utensils, gadgets bought with good intentions, food hidden at the back of cupboards, ornaments, paperwork and things that never found a proper home can all compete for our attention. When we are already tired, low, anxious or overwhelmed, that extra visual and practical load can make preparing food feel like a much bigger task.

This checklist is not about creating a showroom kitchen or throwing away things you love. It is about making the room easier to see, move around and use. The aim is simple: keep what is useful or genuinely meaningful, reduce what is getting in the way, and create enough clear space for everyday life.

Before you begin

Do one area at a time. You do not need to empty the whole kitchen. Choose a worktop, one drawer or one shelf. Have four temporary categories nearby: Keep, Donate, Recycle and Bin. If deciding feels difficult, create a small Not sure yet box and revisit it later.

1. Start with the worktops

Worktops are valuable working space. Clearing even one section can make the kitchen feel more usable straight away.

- ☐ Remove anything that belongs in another room.
- ☐ Put away appliances you rarely use rather than keeping every appliance on display.
- ☐ Group the things you use every day so they are easy to reach.
- ☐ Look at decorative items. Do you enjoy seeing them, or are they simply occupying useful space?
- ☐ Clear old post, receipts, packaging and miscellaneous items.
- ☐ Leave at least one clear area for making a drink or preparing food.

2. The utensil and 'everything' drawers

Drawers often collect duplicates and objects we have stopped noticing.

- ☐ Take out broken, uncomfortable or damaged utensils.
- ☐ Check how many versions of the same tool you own.
- ☐ Keep the utensils you actually reach for.
- ☐ Move batteries, paperwork, tools and unrelated objects to a more suitable home.
- ☐ Ask whether specialist gadgets have been used in the last year.
- ☐ Use simple dividers only if they genuinely make the drawer easier to use.

3. Cupboards and shelves

The goal is visibility. If you cannot see what you own, it is easier to buy duplicates and harder to decide what to cook.

- ☐ Work on one shelf at a time rather than emptying every cupboard.
- ☐ Bring similar foods together: breakfast, tins, grains, snacks, baking or quick meals.
- ☐ Move frequently used items to the easiest-to-reach shelves.
- ☐ Check use-by and best-before dates and use appropriate food-safety judgement.
- ☐ Notice packets you repeatedly buy but rarely eat.
- ☐ Remove empty containers and packaging that no longer serves a purpose.
- ☐ Avoid buying storage containers simply to organise clutter - reduce first, organise second.

4. Fridge and freezer

A crowded fridge can hide food until it is forgotten. A simpler layout makes it easier to see what needs using.

- ☐ Discard food that is no longer safe to eat.
- ☐ Bring foods that need using soon towards the front.
- ☐ Group similar items together.
- ☐ Check duplicate sauces, jars and opened products.
- ☐ Label frozen leftovers with what they are and, where useful, the date.
- ☐ Create a visible 'use first' area for food approaching its date.
- ☐ Keep a short note of freezer meals so you do not have to remember what is buried inside.

5. Crockery, mugs and containers

These are common areas for 'just in case' keeping. Think about what your household realistically uses.

- ☐ Remove chipped or unsafe crockery.
- ☐ Match food-storage containers with their lids.
- ☐ Recycle or repurpose containers that no longer have a matching part where appropriate.
- ☐ Consider whether you need every mug, glass, bowl and plate you own.
- ☐ Keep sentimental pieces intentionally rather than allowing them to disappear into overcrowded cupboards.
- ☐ Donate usable excess items rather than keeping them because they might someday be useful.

6. Gadgets: bought, stored, forgotten

Kitchen gadgets are often bought because they promise to make life easier. If they are never used, storing them can create the opposite effect.

- ☐ List the appliances and gadgets you genuinely use.
- ☐ Ask when each unused gadget was last used.
- ☐ Notice whether an item saves you time or creates extra washing, assembly or decisions.
- ☐ Keep equipment for a real routine, not an imagined version of how you think you should cook.
- ☐ Donate safe, working items that could be useful to someone else.
- ☐ Before buying another gadget, ask: do I already own something that does this job?

7. Ornaments and visual clutter

There is nothing wrong with decoration. The question is whether an object adds something you value or simply adds another thing for your eyes and brain to process.

- ☐ Keep decorations you genuinely enjoy.
- ☐ Remove items you no longer notice or like.
- ☐ Do not feel obliged to display every gift you have received.
- ☐ Consider rotating meaningful objects instead of displaying everything at once.
- ☐ Protect clear surfaces as useful space rather than automatically filling them.
- ☐ Remember: letting go of an object does not erase the person, memory or moment connected with it.

8. Before you buy more

Decluttering works best when we also interrupt the cycle of bringing unnecessary duplicates back into the room.

- ☐ Check cupboards, fridge and freezer before shopping.
- ☐ Photograph or note what you already have if remembering is difficult.
- ☐ Pause before buying organisers, gadgets or bulk packs.
- ☐ Ask: Where will this live? What will it replace? When will I realistically use it?
- ☐ Use what you already own before automatically buying another version.
- ☐ Keep a simple 'don't need' list for items you are repeatedly tempted to rebuy.

The 10-minute kitchen reset

On a difficult day, forget the whole checklist. Set a short timer if that helps and choose only what will make the room more functional.

- ☐ Put obvious rubbish in the bin.
- ☐ Take cups and dishes to the sink or dishwasher.
- ☐ Clear one small section of worktop.
- ☐ Put five things back where they belong.
- ☐ Check for food that needs refrigerating.
- ☐ Stop. You are allowed to finish here.

A useful question for every object

Do I use it? Do I genuinely value it? Does it make this room easier to live in - or is it simply taking up space?

There is no correct number of possessions and no need to adopt a minimalist lifestyle. For some people, familiar objects are comforting and important. For others, reducing visual clutter can make a space feel easier to navigate. The useful measure is whether your kitchen works for you.

The brain-body connection

Our surroundings can influence how demanding a task feels. A crowded surface can mean more objects to visually filter, more decisions about where things belong and fewer usable spaces for the task in front of us. Creating a simpler environment does not treat depression, anxiety, ADHD, autism, grief or burnout, but practical environmental changes can reduce some of the demands surrounding everyday activities.

If cooking or cleaning feels impossible

Start with function rather than appearance. You need enough space to make something to eat, access clean drinking water and use essential equipment safely. Everything else can wait. If you are struggling with depression or another mental-health difficulty and basic self-care has become persistently hard, consider seeking support from someone you trust or an appropriate health professional.

A message from Maggie

You do not need a perfect kitchen to feel more settled in your home. Sometimes one clear surface, one drawer you can open without fighting it, or being able to see what food you already have is enough to make the next task feel more possible. Decluttering is not about judging what you own. It is about asking whether your surroundings are helping you live the life you have now.

[Space to Breathe Therapy](#)