

Tackling Your Purchasing Weak Spots

The first step to tackling ANY of these categories is to get a complete picture of what you already own. In true Marie Kondo style, start by assembling similar items in the same place of your house.

Consumables-- Household & Hygiene

If you find yourself stockpiling candles, hand soap, and other yummy consumables-- start by taking stock of what you already own. Put all similar products in the same location (ex. ALL your spare candles in the laundry room, EVERY hand soap in the hall closet) and make a commitment to use up what you have-- and give away products you are no longer interested in using-- before you buy more.

When it's time to buy more-- think about how long it took you to go through your products. Chances are, you'll be surprised by how long it took to "use up" some of your items. Did it take 3 months to burn one candle? Try buying only one or two instead of ten.

Clothes, Shoes, & Accessories

First and foremost, shop your closet. Remove anything that is in bad condition (ripped seams, stains, etc.) for recycling. Remove clothing that doesn't fit or doesn't feel attractive on your body for donation. You are keeping only what makes you feel like \$1,000,000! It's okay if that leaves you with only a handful of clothing items-- chances are, that's all you were wearing in the first place.

Store anything "out of season" together out of the way-- designate a different drawer or shelf if you don't have room outside of your closet to store it. Now, notice how it feels to get dressed in the morning. Better already?

But what happens when you have the itch for something new? **Here's a few questions to ask yourself:**

- How are you hoping to feel when you wear this? Brutal honesty here-- Accomplished? Sexy? Athletic?
- When do you see yourself wearing this? Be specific.
 - Do you have any of these events coming up in the next month? Next 3 months?
- Do you already have something in your closet that meets this wardrobe criteria?

For example: If I'm looking at a pair of JEANS, I might say-- Yepp! I'd wear this type of outfit to be comfortable (but not frumpy!) on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday... you get the picture. I have two pairs of jeans in my closet but constantly find myself reaching for another when they're in the wash. Sounds like a BUY.

OR, I might be looking at a date night dress. I might say-- I'd love to feel sexy in this BUT my partner and I don't get all "fancied up" for most of our dates. I'm nursing an infant, and this dress doesn't give me easy access for breastfeeding. And if I really had an occasion to dress up for, I own something similar in a different color. Sounds like I'm actually buying for my idealized self-- PASS.

Note: There may be special occasion wear, such as a bridesmaids dress, that is pretty much a "wear it once" with no workarounds in your closet-- that's totally okay! Just be honest with yourself about its future prospects in your life and consider donating it to a prom closet when you're done.

Household Decor

It's easy to fall into the trap of purchasing things that are 'cute-enough' to fill every empty space in your home-- especially when you are worried about what others may think of your space. Start by considering just how many items are in your house primarily so other people can see them and think you're a composed adult... I'm looking at you, lemon zester. (Is that even a thing??)

Questions to consider

- What function will this serve in my house?
 - Is there already something serving this purpose?
- What feeling do I want people to have when they use or look at this item? Do I (or a family member) feel joy when I look at this?
 - "Delight" and "interest" are always more appealing choices than "eh, it's cute" for decorations
- Who do I want to see this? (A great way to distinguish between what we "should" own and what actually appeals to us)
- If it's a box or a bin or anything vaguely "organization" related-- have you tried decluttering first?

For example, my family recently purchased six barstools to sit around our kitchen island. The *function* was to make the island a space of gathering for family and friends, and we didn't already have barstools for the space. The *feeling* we wanted was comfortable and unobtrusive-- the seats should be comfortable to sit in to eat or work from, but small enough to slide under the island. Craftsmanship and sustainability were important to us, so we chose solid wood stools made from reclaimed pine.

It's also totally fine to sit in the silence of a space. You will rarely find an object that speaks to your heart (remember, we're going for delight and interest, not just cute-status) in the aisles of a big box store... so even if you know you will eventually want a statue or piece of artwork to occupy a space, know that eventually, what you want to fill it will come to you.

When you are shopping for an item that serves a **function** in your home-- such as a new towel rack or a doormat so you stop tracking dirt into your entryway-- aesthetics of course matter. Give yourself permission to choose the item that serves a purpose AND looks pretty (and, of course, meets your other values-- such as sustainability).

But save the purely decorative objects for those that speak to your heart rather "look cute" while taking up space.

What about seasonal items? First-- stop decorating for any and every holiday because you feel like you "should." Those decorations only make it out of their boxes if they bring you joy.

Second-- what's the sweet spot of decorating that makes you feel appropriately festive? I'll celebrate the 10+ holidays every year happily without decorations... but it's not Christmas until I hang stockings (The tree, in case you were wondering, is in fact optional). If you're considering purchasing new seasonal items--

1. How does this item help me embrace the spirit of the holiday? (For example, an advent calendar may give you a place to store the activities you are doing to celebrate Christmas).
2. How do I feel when I look at this item? Do I already have similar items that make me feel this way? (Think about the law of diminishing returns-- the first stuffed turkey may bring you lots of joy, the 12th... not so much).
3. Is this item worth the space it will take up (mentally and literally, in a box) for the remainder of the year?

Books

Start by going through your current bookshelf-- are there books on your shelf you have been meaning to read? Read these (or pass them on) before you go shopping for new literature.

- Book purchases are one place we see our "idealized" self come out-- we buy a book because we think it's what an adult/ a "well-read person," etc. would read... would you still buy this book if no one ever knew you read it? Start by going through your current bookshelf--
- If so, is it a book you plan to re-read or frequently refer back to? (*Spoiler alert: You may not know you'll want to re-read it until you've.. read it. Ha! If so, delay purchasing in favor of borrowing*).
 - For read-it-once books, try the library (inter-library loan is often an option if your local library doesn't have a copy), check with a friend, or ask your local Buy Nothing group.
- If you can't borrow it, commit to finishing one book (whether that's reading it front-to-back or deciding it isn't for you) before you purchase another.
- Purchasing e-book versions will typically be less expensive-- but if you like the tactile experience of a physical book in hand, make a plan for passing the book on if you won't read it again.

A note on children's books: Unlike adults, young children are likely to read their books over... and over... and over again. (I'm looking at you, *Goodnight Moon*). This repetition is actually good for their brain development! Of course, you can use the library and swap books with friends-- but it's perfectly fine to purchase these books too (especially in the early teething and tearing everything stages!). Basic criteria for purchase include-- will my child(ren) enjoy it? Will I still have my sanity after reading it? And-- did I set a budget and stick to it?

Children's Gear

The Toy Association proudly estimates that 3 billion toys are sold annually in the United States alone— averaging out to 41 toys per child! And that figure doesn't even include books, electronics, sporting equipment, or the dreaded Happy Meal toys.



Just the idea of 40+ toys PER CHILD entering my home every year is enough to give me a panic attack. Here are some thoughts for bringing a more appropriate number of toys into your child's life:

- Is this an open ended or close ended toy?
 - Open ended means there are *lots* of ways to play with an item, such as blocks or accessories for pretend play; a close ended toy has a "purpose," such as a puzzle or shape sorter.
 - Both open-ended and close-ended toys are important: Open-ended toys allow for creativity and imagination, while close-ended toys give children a sense of accomplishment by mastering age-appropriate challenges. Aim to keep a few of each kind of toy available to your little ones.
- Is this a toy my child will engage with, or one they are just "entertained by"? Flashy lights and loud music on plastic toys is entertaining for a few minutes, but probably won't hold your kiddo's attention long-term.
- Are you buying this toy because it's something you would have loved as a child? Or are you seeing the actual interests of your child?
- **And: Is this something you can add to your kiddo's holiday or birthday wish list?** Grandparents, aunts/ uncles, and friends LOVE to be the ones purchasing "fun" stuff for the kids' in their lives... giving them specific suggestions is a great way for your child to enjoy new toys without cluttering your home (or blowing your budget!).

What about kids' clothes?

Children are CONSTANTLY outgrowing their clothes and needing new gear. To minimize your stress-- as well as the impact on your pocketbook (and the environment!) try creating capsule wardrobes for your children.

The idea behind a capsule wardrobe is simple: Just a handful of seasonally appropriate clothes that can mix and match... enough to give your child variety without over-stuffing their closets.

So how many clothes should you have? The answer depends on your lifestyle and your child! If you do laundry every few days, you'll need less clothing than someone who saves their laundry for the end of the month (eek!).

In the INFANT stage, where my littles go through multiple outfits a day-- I personally keep (give or take) 8 short sleeve onesies, 8 long sleeve shirts/onesies, 8 sleepers, and a few jackets/ sweaters + dress up clothes per size.

As kiddos get older, they will also have an opinion about their clothing type (More dresses? No collars?) to take into account.

In a PRESCHOOL stage, you might keep 6-8 shirts, 4-6 pants (leggings + jeans, shorts in the summer), 2-3 pajamas, 2 jackets/ sweatshirts, and a dress up outfit.

My current toddler capsule has 6 long sleeve shirts, 5 pairs of pants, 3 pajamas, 2 dresses, a sweatshirt, a jacket, and 2 pairs of shoes.

Once you decide the appropriate number of clothes for your child's wardrobe, commit to a color palette for the season so everything will coordinate (*Unless, of course, mis-matched is your thing! Then by all means, carry on*). If you're trying to keep things really simple, try colorful tops but neutral leggings.

But here's a trick: **Limit the number of shopping trips (whether in-person or online) you make in a season.** Every brand has slightly different sizing and color palettes every season, so stick to just a few stores to mix-and-match more easily.