



Cut Your Clutter

An uncluttered house is a safer house: Less stuff lying around means fewer tripping hazards. Follow these steps to declutter and get organized.

1 Plan your attack. Commit to getting organized and make it happen, but pace yourself. Spread the workload over several days, even weeks.

2 Sort. Put related items into piles or boxes.

3 Purge. Re-evaluate essentials and eliminate duplicates – if you haven't used it in a year or you have more than one, it goes.

4 Assign a home. Take a hard look at your newfound space and decide where objects should go. They tend to pile up in certain spots, so adapt those spaces to meet your needs and store objects neatly where you use them. Keep frequently used items accessible.

5 "Containerize." Arrange items in bins, baskets, hooks or hangers. Assign every family member a labeled bin to corral drop-zone clutter.

6 Equalize. Always put things away. Paperwork can be a real challenge, so sort mail daily and keep papers organized with folders and a filing system.

—MARY ANNE DUNKIN

The Crock-Pot Smart Slow Cooker (\$85, amazon.com) uses an app to turn your phone into a remote control from anywhere.



Smart Cooking

KITCHEN APPLIANCES GO HIGH-TECH.

Coffee makers, blenders, scales, even slow cookers have suddenly developed brains – or at least smartphone-based features. Now there are apps for making meals and adding convenience and precision to cooking. App-enabled devices can provide more consistent results, which is a boon if someone in your family has particular nutrition needs.

START SMART

- Instructions and recipes are usually embedded in the apps; don't expect a manual.
- Practice with water to confirm you're using controls correctly.
- YouTube instructional videos may be more helpful than the manufacturer's website.
- Review the instructions to learn how to use the device manually in case the smart features don't deliver. —J.C.

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Minimize repetitive motions. For example, when sanding wood or pressing fabric, work with the weight of the tool. Jeni Baker, a quilt designer and blogger (incolororder.com) who was diagnosed with juvenile arthritis as a child, has abandoned inexpensive irons for a heavy one, the Velocity iron by The Reliable

Corp. "The weight of it does the work," she says. "I don't have to put pressure on it."

Put your body weight to work. Stand to cut, says Lauren DeTullio, an occupational therapist with Philadelphia Hand to Shoulder Center. Position the cutting surface so your body weight adds momentum to cutting.

Find the right tool. It should nestle in your palm, giving you good grip and control, says DeTullio. For example, she prefers warm, lightweight bamboo hooks to cold aluminum hooks when she crochets.

Check your technique. Tool manufacturers' online instructional videos can

help ensure you know the best techniques, and then you can adapt for your comfort, says DeTullio.

Support your creation as it grows. Prop up the quilt, sweater or length of wood so that you're not simultaneously working on it and managing its weight, says DeTullio. —JOANNE CLEAVER