

Estate Cleanout & Decluttering Checklist

The room-by-room plan for clearing a whole home — without losing what matters.

BEFORE YOU START

- ☐ Walk every room and **photograph the starting state** — it keeps quotes honest and shows progress.
- ☐ Set a firm finish date; open-ended cleanouts stall. **Book the haul-away first** and work backward.
- ☐ Stock supplies: contractor bags, boxes, markers, gloves and colored tape for sorting zones.
- ☐ For an estate, confirm **who has legal authority** to dispose of property before anything leaves.
- ☐ Reserve driveway or street space for the truck and prop doors along the carry path.

SORT WITH THE FOUR-PILE METHOD

- ☐ Tape off four zones — Keep, Donate, Sell, Haul — and let **every item touch only one pile**.
- ☐ Start with the easiest room to build momentum; bathrooms and laundry rooms sort fastest.
- ☐ Apply the 12-month rule: **unused for a year, it goes** — except legal papers and true heirlooms.
- ☐ Box the Keep pile immediately and move it out of the work zone so it never gets re-sorted.
- ☐ Save photos and keepsakes for a fresh morning — decision fatigue is how junk survives.

PAPERWORK & VALUABLES

- ☐ Check books, mattress seams, coat pockets and freezers — **cash and jewelry hide in odd places**.
- ☐ Pull deeds, titles, wills, insurance policies and seven years of tax returns into one fireproof box.
- ☐ Set aside coins, art, tools and anything possibly valuable for **a quick appraisal before hauling**.
- ☐ Shred anything with account or Social Security numbers — never bag it whole.
- ☐ Photograph sentimental items you're letting go; the picture keeps the memory, not the object.

DONATE, SELL OR RECYCLE

- ☐ Donate usable furniture and clothing — and get a **receipt for the tax deduction**.
- ☐ List high-value pieces for sale early; furniture loses buyers fast once listings go stale.
- ☐ Recycle electronics through a certified e-waste program, never the curb.
- ☐ Fridges and AC units need **certified freon recovery** — fines apply for dumping them.
- ☐ Drop paint, chemicals and batteries at your county hazardous-waste site; haulers can't take them.

HAULING DAY

- ☐ Clear a path from each pile to the door and **measure tight doorways** for bulky furniture.
- ☐ Tape bright notes on anything staying so the crew never has to guess.
- ☐ Confirm the final all-in price before loading starts — good haulers **quote before they lift**.
- ☐ Keep kids and pets clear of the carry path and stairs.
- ☐ Do a last sweep of closets, attic, crawl space and behind appliances before the truck leaves.

AFTER THE CLEANOUT

- ☐ Deep-clean once rooms are empty — dust keeps settling for days after a big haul.
- ☐ Fix what the clutter was hiding: **check for moisture, pests and damaged flooring**.
- ☐ Adopt a one-in-one-out rule so the space stays clear.
- ☐ Cancel any storage unit you no longer need — that's \$100–\$300 a month back in your pocket.

Don't toss anything blind: estate cleanouts regularly turn up savings bonds, jewelry and cash tucked in books, mattress seams and coat pockets. Check every item before it leaves the house.