Declutter and Clean in One Weekend

A whole-home reset in two days — without burning out, breaking anything, or living out of bin bags for a week.

Quick Facts

- **Time:** Saturday about 6–7 hours of active work; Sunday about 5–6 hours, plus breaks.
- **Breaks:** 15 minutes every 90 minutes, plus a proper 45-minute lunch break. Drink water — this is a marathon, not a sprint.
- **Difficulty:** Moderate — mostly decision-making, not heavy labour.
- **Cost:** Bin bags, a few boxes, and basic cleaners you probably already own.
- **Golden rule:** Declutter first, then clean. Cleaning around clutter just moves dust from one pile to another.

Friday Night Prep — 30 Minutes

Friday-night prep is what makes the weekend actually work. Do not skip it.

- **Supplies:** 2 rolls of strong bin bags (black for rubbish, white/clear for donations); 4–6 sturdy boxes or laundry baskets labelled KEEP, DONATE, RELOCATE and BIN; a marker pen, sticky labels, a timer, rubber gloves, and a dust mask if you are sensitive to dust.
- **Cleaning kit:** All-purpose cleaner (or 1 part white vinegar to 1 part water for general surfaces — never on natural stone); baking soda; mild dish soap (1 teaspoon per 4 litres of warm water for mopping and wiping); microfibre cloths; a duster with an extendable handle; a vacuum cleaner; a mop and bucket; a bathroom cleaner or 3% hydrogen peroxide for grout; glass cleaner or a 1:1 vinegar-water spray for mirrors and glass.
- **Book the end point:** Check your local charity shop's opening hours and whether they accept drop-offs on Sunday or Monday, and check when your bins are collected. A donate pile with nowhere to go just becomes new clutter.
- **Ground rules:** One room at a time, start to finish. Nothing leaves a room except in a labelled bag or box. If you have not used something in 12 months and it has no sentimental or seasonal purpose, it goes. Photograph sentimental items you are letting go of — the memory survives without the object.

The Decision Rules

Decision fatigue is the real enemy. Use these rules and do not renegotiate them mid-room.

- **Keep it** — if you have used it in the last 12 months, it works, and it has a home in this room.
- **Donate it** — if it works and is clean but you have not used it in 12 months.
- **Bin or recycle it** — if it is broken, stained beyond cleaning, missing parts, or expired (medicines, cosmetics, pantry items, batteries — dispose of these properly, never in general waste where local rules say otherwise).
- **Relocate it** — if it belongs in another room. Put it in the RELOCATE box; do not wander off to put it away. Deal with that box at the end of each day.
- **The maybe box** — one small box per household, not per room. Anything you genuinely cannot decide on goes in, sealed, dated, and stored out of sight. If you have not opened it in 6 months, donate it unopened.
- **The 20-second rule** — if you hold an item for more than 20 seconds without deciding, it goes in the maybe box. Move on. Momentum beats perfection.

Saturday — Declutter Day (Plus a Light Clean as You Go)

8:30–9:00 — Warm-Up: Entryway and Hallway (30 minutes)

- Remove everything that does not belong: shoes never worn, dead umbrellas, old flyers, bags of bags.
- Keep only: one pair of everyday shoes per person, coats currently in season, keys, and one bag or basket for outgoing post and parcels.
- Wipe the console table, door handles and light switches with all-purpose cleaner. Sweep or vacuum the floor, then mop hard floors with 1 teaspoon of dish soap per 4 litres of warm water.
- Hang a hook or place a small basket by the door for keys and sunglasses so clutter does not creep back.

9:00–11:00 — Living Room (2 hours)

- **Declutter first:** Work clockwise from the door. Books you will never re-read, DVDs nobody watches, broken remotes, old magazines, migrated toys, cables with no device — sort into KEEP, DONATE, RELOCATE and BIN.
- **Surfaces:** Clear every surface completely before cleaning it. Dust shelves top to bottom with a damp microfibre cloth. Wipe coffee tables and side tables with all-purpose cleaner.
- **Soft furnishings:** Shake removable cushion covers outdoors, or vacuum them with the upholstery attachment. Vacuum the sofa, including under the cushions and along seams.
- **Floors:** Vacuum slowly in both directions, then mop hard floors. For rugs, vacuum both sides if you can lift them; spot-clean marks with 1 teaspoon of dish soap in 1 cup (240 ml) of cool water, blotted — never rubbed — with a clean cloth.
- **Electronics:** Dust screens with a dry microfibre cloth only. Untangle cables, label the ones you keep, and bin or recycle dead chargers.

11:15–1:15 — Kitchen (2 hours)

- **Declutter first:** Empty one cupboard or drawer at a time — never the whole kitchen at once. Check expiry dates on pantry items, spices (ground spices lose flavour after about 6–12 months), sauces and medicines. Keep only one of each duplicate gadget unless you genuinely use both weekly. Chipped mugs, cracked containers without lids, and lids without containers all go.
- **Countertops:** Clear completely. Wipe with all-purpose cleaner — or, for granite and marble, a pH-neutral stone cleaner or plain warm water with a drop of dish soap only, never vinegar or acidic sprays, which etch natural stone.
- **Cooktop:** For a glass cooktop, use baking soda paste (3 tablespoons baking soda + 1 tablespoon water), spread, leave 10–15 minutes, wipe off.
- **Appliances:** Wipe the outside of the fridge, microwave and oven. Clean the microwave by heating a bowl of water with lemon slices for 3 minutes, then wiping the loosened grime. Empty and wipe visibly dirty fridge shelves.
- **Sink and floor:** Scrub the sink with baking soda paste, rinse, and dry to prevent water marks. Sweep, then mop with 1 teaspoon of dish soap per 4 litres of warm water. Empty the bin, wipe the bin itself, and put in a fresh bag.

2:00–4:00 — Bedrooms (2 hours, about 1 hour per bedroom)

- **Declutter first:** Be ruthless with wardrobes — if it does not fit, is damaged beyond a simple repair, or you have not worn it in 12 months, it goes. Under the bed: keep only seasonal storage or items you genuinely retrieve.
- **Surfaces:** Dust dressers, nightstands and shelves top to bottom. Wipe mirrors with glass cleaner or 1:1 vinegar-water spray and a dry microfibre cloth for a streak-free finish.

- **Bedding:** Strip the beds and wash sheets on a normal cycle. While the bed is bare, vacuum the mattress surface with the upholstery attachment. Spot-clean marks with 1 tablespoon of dish soap in 2 cups (480 ml) of cool water, dabbed — never soaked, since a mattress must never be saturated.
- **Floors:** Vacuum thoroughly, including under the bed and behind doors. Mop hard floors.

4:00–5:00 — Bathrooms (1 hour for the main bathroom; add 30 minutes per extra bathroom)

- **Declutter first:** Expired medicines (take these to a pharmacy take-back, never flush them), empty bottles, dried-out cosmetics, old razors, and duplicate shampoos — keep one, bin or recycle the rest. Keep only daily-use items on surfaces.
- **Surfaces:** Spray the shower, bath and sink with bathroom cleaner or a 1:1 vinegar-water spray (never on natural stone), leave for 10–15 minutes, then scrub and rinse. For grout, make a paste of 3 tablespoons of baking soda + 1 tablespoon of water, apply, leave 10–15 minutes, scrub with an old toothbrush, rinse.
- **Toilet:** Clean inside the bowl with toilet cleaner, leave for 10 minutes, brush and flush. Wipe the seat, lid and base with disinfectant.
- **Floors and mirrors:** Mop the floor, clean the mirror with glass cleaner, and replace towels with fresh ones. Empty the bin.

5:00–5:30 — Saturday Close-Down (30 minutes)

- Carry the RELOCATE box around the house once and put everything where it belongs. Empty it completely — it must be empty tonight.
- Bag up all BIN bags and take them to the outside bin. Stack DONATE bags and boxes by the door, ready for drop-off.
- Run the vacuum over high-traffic areas once more, wipe the kitchen counters so you wake up to a clean kitchen.
- **Saturday rule:** Do not start a new room after 5:30 pm. You have earned the evening off, and Sunday works better when you are not exhausted.

Sunday — Deep Clean Day (Plus Finishing the Declutter)

9:00–10:30 — Finish Decluttering: Storage Areas, Spare Room and Loose Ends (90 minutes)

- **Storage areas:** Cupboards, the utility area, the garage entrance or hallway cupboard — one at a time. Keep only what you use or genuinely need for the season. Label every box you keep with its contents and the date.
- **Spare room / office:** Clear the desk, file or shred old papers (keep tax and legal documents per your local rules — usually several years), recycle dead pens, and untangle cables.
- **The maybe box:** Seal it, date it, and store it somewhere out of daily sight — top of a wardrobe, not the hallway.
- **Donations out:** Load the car or book a charity collection. If the charity shop is closed on Sunday, put the bags in the car boot now so Monday's drop-off actually happens.

10:30–12:00 — Deep Clean: Kitchen and Bathrooms (90 minutes)

- **Kitchen:** Degrease the hob and splashback, clean the extractor filter if removable (soak in hot water with 2 tablespoons of dish soap for 15–20 minutes, scrub, rinse, dry fully before refitting), wipe inside the microwave and the fridge door seals, and clean small appliances you use daily (kettle exterior, toaster crumb tray).
- **Bathrooms:** Descale the showerhead if flow is weak — soak a removable head in 1 part vinegar to 1 part water for 30–60 minutes (never longer than 2 hours, and never on gold, brass or nickel finishes without checking the manufacturer's guidance), rinse and refit. Scrub grout lines again if still dull, clean

drains of hair and debris, and polish taps with a dry cloth.

12:45–2:15 — Deep Clean: Living Areas and Bedrooms (90 minutes)

- **Dust high to low:** Ceiling fans (a damp pillowcase over each blade traps the dust instead of scattering it), tops of wardrobes and shelves, picture frames, light fittings, then all lower surfaces. Use an extendable duster for high spots — only use a step ladder on a flat, stable floor, never on a chair, and never overreach.
- **Windows:** Clean inside glass with glass cleaner or 1:1 vinegar-water spray, wipe sills and tracks with a damp cloth, and remove dust from blinds with a damp cloth or vacuum brush attachment.
- **Floors:** Vacuum all rooms slowly, including edges and corners. Mop hard floors in sections, drying each section as you go — never leave a floor soaking wet, especially laminate or wood, which swell and warp. For carpets, vacuum twice over high-traffic areas.
- **Soft furnishings:** Vacuum curtains if they cannot be washed, or put washable cushion covers and throws in the wash.

2:15–3:15 — Floors, Doors and Details (1 hour)

- Wipe door handles, light switches and socket plates throughout the house with all-purpose cleaner — these are touched daily and rarely cleaned.
- Wipe skirting boards with a damp cloth and 1 teaspoon of dish soap per 4 litres of warm water. Spot-clean scuff marks with baking soda paste (3 tablespoons + 1 tablespoon water), rubbed gently for 20–30 seconds, then wiped clean.
- Clean inside the front door area: the mat (shake outdoors, vacuum both sides), the letterbox, and the door itself.
- Empty every bin in the house, wipe the bins, and put in fresh bags.

3:15–4:00 — Final Walk-Through and Reset (45 minutes)

- Walk through every room with fresh eyes, carrying a cloth and a bag. Pick up anything out of place, wipe any mark you missed, and fluff cushions and straighten throws.
- Make every bed with fresh linen. Put fresh hand towels in the bathrooms and a fresh tea towel in the kitchen.
- Put the cleaning kit away, in one place, so next weekend's maintenance clean takes minutes, not a search mission.
- **Take a photo of each room.** Not for social media — for you. Next time motivation dips, these photos remind you what the house looks like at its best.

Keeping It Clean After the Weekend

- **The 10-minute nightly reset:** Everyone in the household spends 10 minutes putting things back where they belong. Set a timer — it is short enough that nobody minds.
- **One in, one out:** Every new item that enters the house means one old item leaves. This single rule prevents the next clutter build-up.
- **Weekly maintenance:** One 15-minute clean per day, rotating rooms — Monday kitchen, Tuesday bathrooms, Wednesday living areas, Thursday bedrooms, Friday floors — keeps the house at weekend standard without another marathon.
- **Seasonal check:** Every 3 months, open the maybe box, the top of the wardrobe, and one storage cupboard. If you have not touched something in that time, it is a candidate to go.

Safety — Please Read First

- Wear gloves for dusty, dirty or damp areas. Open windows for ventilation whenever you use sprays or strong cleaners.
- **Never mix bleach with vinegar or ammonia** — the fumes are dangerous. Use one product at a time and rinse between products.
- Lift with your knees, not your back, and never carry a box you cannot see over.
- Never soak a mattress, a rug that cannot be washed, or laminate and wood floors — trapped moisture causes mould, warping and permanent damage.
- Use a step ladder only on a flat, stable floor — never on a chair — and never overreach.

Tick-Off Checklist

Tick each step as you finish it.

- [ ] Supplies gathered Friday night: bin bags, labelled boxes, marker, gloves, mask, cleaning kit
- [ ] Charity shop hours and bin collection day checked
- [ ] Entryway and hallway decluttered and cleaned
- [ ] Living room decluttered clockwise from the door, surfaces dusted top to bottom
- [ ] Sofa vacuumed, including under cushions and along seams
- [ ] Living room floors vacuumed and mopped; rugs spot-cleaned if needed
- [ ] Kitchen cupboards and drawers decluttered one at a time; expired items binned
- [ ] Kitchen countertops cleared and wiped (stone-safe cleaner on natural stone only)
- [ ] Hob cleaned; microwave cleaned; sink scrubbed and dried
- [ ] Kitchen floor swept and mopped; bin emptied and wiped
- [ ] Bedrooms decluttered; wardrobes sorted by the 12-month rule
- [ ] Beds stripped, sheets washed, mattress vacuumed, marks spot-cleaned
- [ ] Bedroom floors vacuumed and mopped
- [ ] Bathrooms decluttered; expired medicines and cosmetics removed
- [ ] Shower, bath, sink and toilet cleaned; grout scrubbed; mirrors cleaned
- [ ] Bathroom floors mopped; fresh towels put out
- [ ] RELOCATE box emptied completely on Saturday evening
- [ ] BIN bags taken out; DONATE bags stacked by the door
- [ ] Storage areas, spare room and office decluttered on Sunday
- [ ] Maybe box sealed, dated and stored out of sight
- [ ] Donations loaded in the car or collection booked
- [ ] Kitchen deep-cleaned: hob degreased, extractor filter soaked and refitted, appliance seals wiped
- [ ] Bathrooms deep-cleaned: showerhead descaled if needed, drains cleared, taps polished
- [ ] Ceiling fans, high shelves and light fittings dusted high to low
- [ ] Windows, sills, tracks and blinds cleaned
- [ ] All floors vacuumed and mopped in sections, dried as you go
- [ ] Door handles, light switches, socket plates and skirting boards wiped

- [ ] Every bin emptied, wiped and re-bagged
- [ ] Final walk-through done; beds made with fresh linen; fresh towels out
- [ ] Cleaning kit put away in one place; room photos taken
- [ ] No bleach mixed with vinegar or ammonia at any stage
- [ ] No vinegar used on natural stone; no mattress or floor soaked; ladder used safely

Notes