

Do you need to declutter your home?

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Neil

Hello, this is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil.

Georgie

And I'm Georgie. Do you live in a neat and tidy home? Or is there stuff everywhere? If your room is filled with heaps of clothes and piles of books, you may have a problem with **clutter** – things in your home which take up space in an untidy, disorganised way.

Neil

Clutter is a common problem. In fact, clutter was the topic of a recent episode of BBC Radio 4 programme, Woman's Hour. Here's presenter Nuala McGovern reading a message from one listener:

Nuala McGovern

Some of you have been in touch already to share your thoughts and experiences when it comes to clutter. Here is one: "The clutter in my house is actually starting to affect my mental health. I can't think or work anymore, so much so it woke me at 4 a.m. this morning and I felt a strong urge to tidy. I have given myself a week as I cannot take it anymore."

Georgie

So, Neil, do you have a problem with clutter?

Neil

Well, I don't have a problem with clutter, but I live with children and there is clutter everywhere, and it drives me mad.

Georgie

Oh, that's so annoying.

Neil

How about you?

Georgie

Yeah, I don't have a problem with clutter. I would describe myself as a minimalist. I don't have very much stuff.

Neil

Ah, very efficient!

Georgie

Yes. So, we don't have a problem with clutter, but if you do, there's a simple solution: decluttering – or throwing away some of the unused stuff filling our homes. But deciding what to keep and what to throw away is not so easy, so in this episode we'll hear some advice on keeping your life clutter-free, along with some useful new words and phrases. And remember, you can find all the vocabulary for this programme, along with a quiz and worksheet, on our website, bbclearningenglish.com.

Neil

But first, I have a question for you, Georgie. Decluttering was popularised by Marie Kondo's best-selling 2011 book, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, and there's still lots of interest today. So, how many Instagram posts can you currently find under the hashtag 'declutter'? Is it:

- a) 2.6 thousand,
- b) 2.6 million, or
- c) 26 million?

Georgie

Hmm, I'm going to go in the middle and say b) 2.6 million.

Neil

OK. We'll find out the answer at the end of the programme. As well as social media, decluttering has become popular with television shows, including the BBC's *Interior Design Masters*. Here, one of the show's judges, Michelle Ogundehin, tells BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* why she thinks clutter is such a problem:

Michelle Ogundehin

Visual clutter is more exhausting than we realise. It's not just stuff. Our brains are constantly processing our surroundings, so they have to **work overtime** if they're

surrounded by chaos. So, if you feel drained or exhausted at home, it could be your clutter. I mean, we know that homily 'clear space, clear mind'. And I promise you that when you clear away the stuff that has no purpose in your life, you will feel better, lighter, **uplifted**, energised!

Georgie

In a cluttered room, our brains **work overtime**, meaning they work extra hard to make sense of the disorder, leaving us exhausted. **Work overtime** also often means work longer than your set hours.

Neil

Getting rid of clutter makes us feel **uplifted** – cheerful, happy and more positive. It sounds simple, doesn't it? And there's even an expression in English: 'clear space, clear mind'. So, why do many of us find it hard to throw stuff away, even things we rarely use?

Georgie

One reason people put off decluttering is the time it takes. Plus, it can be emotionally disturbing deciding what to keep and what to throw away. But don't worry, says professional organiser and host of The Declutter Club podcast, Ingrid Jansen. The answer is to go slow, as she explains here to BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour:

Ingrid Jansen

You have to do decluttering **slowly but surely**: one drawer, one cupboard at a time. You can't go in **all guns blazing**. You can't go... and that's what we hear all the time: "This weekend, I'm going to sort out my whole room of doom." And after two hours in, they will look around and go, "What have I done? There's more chaos than there was before!" because they've **bitten off [too much that] more than they can chew**.

Neil

When it comes to decluttering your home, it's best to do things **slowly but surely** – in a gradual but reliable way which will achieve the result you want.

Georgie

It's a mistake to try to declutter everything all at once, **with all guns blazing** – an idiom meaning to do things dramatically, with lots of energy and enthusiasm. After an hour or two of this, decluttering becomes physically and emotionally exhausting. You may have **bitten off more than you can chew** – another idiom meaning to try doing something which is too difficult for you.

Neil

So, if you want to declutter without stress, remember: break the job down, and go slow. Right, it's time to reveal the answer to my question, Georgie. I asked you how many Instagram posts you can currently find under the hashtag 'declutter'.

Georgie

I said b) 2.6 million.

Neil

Well, you were correct. Well done!

Georgie

Yay!

Neil

OK. Let's recap the vocabulary we've learned in this episode about **clutter** – things we buy which fill up our homes in an untidy, disorganised way.

Georgie

When something has to **work overtime**, it works extra hard using lots of energy. **Work overtime** also often means work longer than your set hours.

Neil

The adjective **uplifted** means feeling cheerful, happy and optimistic.

Georgie

If you do something **slowly but surely**, you do it in a gradual but reliable way which will achieve the result you want.

Neil

The idiom, **with all guns blazing**, describes doing things with lots of energy and enthusiasm.

Georgie

And finally, if you **bite off more than you can chew**, you try to do something which is too difficult for you. Once again, our six minutes are up, but why not head over to our website, bbclearningenglish.com, to try the quiz for this episode? Good luck decluttering and see you again soon.

Neil

Goodbye!

Georgie
Bye!

VOCABULARY

clutter

things which fill up space in your home in an untidy, disorganised way

work overtime

work extra hard using lots of energy

uplifted

feeling cheerful, happy, positive and optimistic

slowly but surely

done in a gradual but reliable way which will definitely achieve the desired result

with all guns blazing

(idiom) with lots of energy and enthusiasm

bite off more than you can chew

(idiom) try to do something which is too difficult for you

