

MINIMALIST RULEBOOK

16

Rules for living with less

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the  minimalist



Minimalist Rulebook: 16 Rules for Living with Less

When it comes to letting go, I wish I could hand you a list of the 100 items you're supposed to own to be a minimalist. But minimalism doesn't work like that.

There's no real *Minimalist Rulebook*. What brings value to my life very well could get in the way of yours. Further, the things that once added value may not continue to add value, so we must constantly question not only the things we acquire but the things we hold on to.

Because minimalism is not an antidote to desire, and because, like most people, Ryan Nicodemus and I still act on impulse, we've created sixteen rules and tactics we use to help stave off the tug of consumerism and get organized. Since the easiest way to organize your stuff is to get rid of most of it, let's explore these rules and tactics.

Table Of Contents

01: 30 Day Minimalism Game

02: Photo Scanning Party

03: No Junk Rule

04: Seasonality Rule

05: 1 In, 10 Out Rule

06: Just In Case Rule

07: Emergency Items Rule

08: Just For When Rule

09: Wait For It Rule

10: Don't Upgrade Rule

11: 10 Most Expensive Possessions Rule

12: Selling Deadline Rule

13: Spontaneous Combustion Rule

14: Willing To Walk Rule

15: Minimalist Gift Giving Rule

16: Minimalist Gift Getting Rule

How To Use These Rules

01

30 DAY MINIMALISM GAME

If Ryan's Packing Party is too extreme for you, I totally understand.

A decade ago, when I was first introduced to minimalism, it was probably too extreme for me, too. That's why he and I came up with the 30 Day Minimalism Game, which has eased tens of thousands of people into decluttering their homes, cars, and offices.

Let's face it, even the thought of "decluttering" is boring at best, dreadful at worse. I mean, who wants to spend their weekend cleaning out their closet, attic, and garage? Bluck! That's exactly why we created the 30 Day Minimalism Game—to make decluttering fun by injecting some friendly competition. Here's how it works.

A new month is always approaching, so right now is a great time to find a friend, family member, or coworker (or archenemy) who's willing to minimize their stuff with you next month. Each person gets rid of one thing on the first day of the month. Two things on the second. Three things on the third. So forth and so on.

Anything goes!

Collectables / Decorations / Kitchenware
Electronics / Furniture / Supplies / Hats
Bedding / Clothes / Towels / Tools



Whether you donate, sell, or recycle your excess, every material possession must be out of your house—and out of your life—by midnight each day.

It's an easy game at first. Anyone can purge a few items, right? But it grows considerably more challenging by week two when you're forced to jettison more than a dozen items per day. And it keeps getting more difficult as the month progresses.

Whoever keeps it going the longest wins. You both win if you both make it to the end of the month. Bonus points if you play with more than two people.

Win or lose, we'd love to hear about your decluttering experience on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Use the hashtag [#MinsGame](#) to find thousands of other people sharing their photos as they let go.



02

PHOTO SCANNING PARTY

If you're looking for one physical item that could add immense value to your life, you may want to consider a good photo scanner.

If you're anything like I was, then you've probably allowed the overstuffed boxes and albums of photos to go unchecked over the years, and now they're collecting dust in your basement or closet—just sitting there, unused, waiting for “one day” to come.

I, too, held on to heaps of meaningful photos that added absolutely no value to my life because they were hidden away, and the prospect of dealing with them seemed daunting, overwhelming, not worth the hassle. So I let them sit in the attic, the cupboard, the garage. Then, inspired by Ryan's Packing Party, I decided to throw a Photo-Scanning Party. (It turns out that if you put “party” at the end of anything, Ryan will show up.)

First, I found a high-quality scanner into which I could rapidly feed photos and documents and immediately save them to a memory card, which I could then use in a few high-res digital picture frames so I could actually display my important photos. Plus, if anything were to happen to my home—flood, fire, robbery—all my photos are saved and secured online; thus, I'll never worry about losing those memories. It goes without saying, the memories aren't in our material possessions, but I discovered that a well-curated photo collection triggers all the wonderful memories of yesteryear—without all the physical baggage.

Next, to make my “party” a little more fun (and less lonely), I invited a few friends over, ordered food and drinks, and together we thumbed through the photographs of my childhood in all its double-chin grandeur, scanning my favorites to display.

As I write this, I still have one remaining box of photos to scan. Another Scanning Party is in order! Feel free to join me: scan your photos and share your favorites on Twitter or Instagram using our #ScanningParty hashtag. And If you want to see the scanner and digital frames Ryan and I use, visit minimalists.com/scanning .



03

NO JUNK RULE

Everything you own can be placed in three piles.

Essentials. Few possessions should fall into this pile. These are the necessities we can't live without: food, shelter, clothes. While the specifics change for each person, most of our *needs* are universal.

Nonessentials. In an ideal world, most of the things we own would fit in this pile. These are the objects we *want* in our lives because they add value. Strictly speaking, I don't need a couch, a bookshelf, or a dining table in my livingroom, but these items enhance, amplify, or augment my experience of life.

Junk. Sadly, most of our things belong in this pile. These are the artifacts we *like*—or, more accurately, think we like—but they don't serve a purpose or bring us joy. The average American home contains an overabundance of stuff—hundreds of thousands of items—and most of it is junk. While this junk often masquerades as indispensable, it actually gets in the way of a life worth living.

The key is to get rid of the junk to make room for everything else. Of course, the personal effects in these three piles are different for everyone, so we've created some more rules to help you get clear on what's valuable and what's simply taking up space.

04

SEASONALITY RULE

Rules can be arbitrary, restrictive, boring—but they are often helpful when we hope to make a change.

Whenever we attempt to simplify our lives, too often we get stuck before we even get started. When faced with a hoard of possessions—some useful, others not—it is difficult to determine what adds value and what doesn't, which makes letting go nearly impossible without some sort of rules to move us in the right direction.

Here's the first rule we created a decade ago: the Seasonality Rule, aka the 90/90 Rule.

Look at a possession.

Pick something.

Anything.

Have you used that item in the last 90 days?

If you haven't, will you use it in the next 90?

If not, it's okay to let go.

What's particularly useful about this rule is that it covers virtually every season. Let's say it's March and you're getting ready to embark on some spring cleaning. Pick up the first item you see in your closet, basement, or storage unit. Maybe it's an old sweater. Are you using it right now (in the spring)? Have you used it in the last 90 days (in the winter)? Will you use it in the next 90 days (in the summer)? If yes, then keep it. If not, say goodbye!

Note: In terms of weather, spring is roughly the same as autumn. That's how this rule covers all four seasons.



05

1 IN, 10 OUT RULE

Being a minimalist doesn't mean you'll never buy anything new. It means you'll do so with intention. It also means you'll let go aggressively and deliberately.

Or you could do both simultaneously.

When I first started simplifying, I was overwhelmed by how much stuff I wanted to jettison. That overwhelm compounded because I still felt the pull of future purchases. To combat impulse shopping and aid my minimizing efforts, I implemented a new rule: the 1 in, 10 out Rule.

Based on the “one-in, one-out policy” that’s used in many nightclubs, bars, and military establishments to control the number of people in one building at any one time, this rule helped me both control what new items I bought and what items I kept, because for every item I acquired, I had to get rid of ten things I owned.

Want that new shirt? Ten articles of clothing hit the donation bin.

Want that new chair? Ten pieces of furniture make it to eBay.

Want that new blender? Ten kitchen items are axed.

This rule helped me reshape my everyday-consumption habits, and, much like the 30 Day Minimalism Game, it has helped a lot of people strengthen their letting-go muscles.

06

JUST IN CASE RULE

What were we doing? Why did I need a suit for this trip? Was it just in case there was an emergency wedding or funeral? And why did I pack all this other stuff, like these three pairs of swimming trunks? I mean, we're going to Florida, so I might as well bring a couple extra pairs just in case, right? And don't forget that blowdryer and a few extra pairs of pants and maybe even a beach towel—you know, just in case!

We were supposed to be “The Minimalists,” and yet there we were with a trunk full of stuff, almost all of which we weren't going to use during that trip, but we packed it all: Just. In. Case.

That's when I learned that “just in case” are the three most dangerous words in the English language. Again and again, we hold on to things “just in case.” When we travel, we cram our luggage with heaps of stuff just in case there's a remote chance we'll use it during our vacation. At home, we don't let go of our hoards of old cables and adapters and boxes just in case we “need” them in some nonexistent distant future.

“Everything I've ever let go of has claw marks on it,” wrote David Foster Wallace in 1996. I think that's true for most of us today. Often, the only way we let go is if we lose our grip. Of course, that's not letting go at all. And if we don't let go, we get dragged.

The truth is we needn't retain most of the things we hang on to. We rarely use our just-in-case items—they sit there, take up space, get in the way, weigh us down. Most of the time they aren't items we need at all. And if we remove the just-in-case items from our lives, we get them out of the way and free up the space they consume.

Ever since that first book tour, I've let go of nearly all of my just-in-case possessions. And during Ryan's and my last book tour, we made sure not to pack anything just in case. We also came up with a hypothesis: the Just in Case Rule, aka the 20/20 Rule.

Here's how it works. Anything we get rid of that we truly need, we can replace for less than \$20 in less than 20 minutes from our current location. Thus far, this hypothesis has become a theory that has held true 100% of the time.

At first, this rule sounds like a rule of privilege. Who can afford to go around spending \$20 every time they replace something? Wouldn't that cost you thousands of dollars every year? Actually, no. It turns out you rarely ever have to replace the items you've jettisoned because most of them are useless.

Personally, I've replaced fewer than five just-in-case items in the last decade, and I've never had to pay more than \$20, or go more than 20 minutes out of my way, to replace them. Most important, the \$100 I've spent replacing those five items gave me permission to let go of thousands of pointless items that were merely taking up space in my home—and in my mind.

I'm sure there are exceptions to this rule. But it is my theory that the Just in Case Rule works 99% of the time for 99% of all items and 99% of all people—including you. Think about it. What are you holding on to just in case? And how much relief would you feel if you let go?



07

EMERGENCY ITEMS RULE

There are, however, a handful of just-in-case items it's best to keep. All of these items fall under the "emergency items" category. Hence, the Emergency Items Rule.

For me, my emergency items include a first-aid kit, jumper cables, and a couple gallons of drinkable water. When I lived in Montana, other items like tire chains, road flares, and an emergency blanket were on the list. While I hope I'll never need to use these items, I find that a basic level of emergency preparation gives me peace of mind.

What do you need in case of an emergency? Be careful when you answer this question. It's easy to justify everything as an "emergency item."

But, as might be expected, most emergencies aren't.

Besides, no matter how much we prepare, we can't prepare for everything.

08

JUST FOR WHEN RULE

So far, we've established that we habitually cling to the things we own "just in case" we might need them someday. And we've determined that we need to keep a well-curated stock of emergency items.

However, there are a few things we know we'll use in a definitive future. We call these belongings "just for when" items. These items are usually consumables, and although they seem similar, they are markedly different from those sneaky just-in-case items. Namely, because we're *certain* we'll use them.

Nobody purchases their toilet paper one square at a time, their soap one droplet at a time, their toothpaste one nurdle at a time. We buy a small stock of each of these products just for when we'll need them.

The key to letting go, then, is to be honest about the trinkets we're clinging to "just in case" we *might* need them and the goods we acquire "just for when" we *will* need them. If we do this properly, our excess begins to look a lot like junk, and it's easier to unload.

09

WAIT FOR IT RULE

With the advent of online shopping, it's easier than ever to add to our hoards. To stave off impulse, I created a rule that helps me avoid unnecessary purchases: the Wait for It Rule, aka the 30/30 Rule.

If something I want costs more than \$30, I ask myself whether I can get by without it for the next 30 hours. (If it's \$100 or more, I tend to wait 30 days.)

This extra time helps me assess whether or not this new thing will really add value to my life. Often, after deliberating, I recognize my life will be better without the new widget, so I forgo the purchase.

If I do acquire the new item, though, I feel better about the acquisition because I brought it into my life with intention, not in the impulse of the moment.

10

DON'T UPGRADE RULE

When it comes to consumer electronics—smartphones, laptops, tablets, and the like—it seems we're presented with the newest, latest, greatest version of Product X every other day.

Product X is “only” X dollars, and it does all the cool things you wish your current, antiquated gadget could do. Act now and Product X will change your life! We know we don't need Product X to live a good life (even though we really, really want it). We know we don't have to buy the new iPhone when our old phone works just fine. We know we don't need a new car just because the old one isn't as shiny, just as we know we don't need the latest version of software, iPad, television, laptop, or gadget to make us happy.

Even though advertisers spend millions to create a sense of urgency to make us drool over their products, we can refuse to play that game. We can turn down the noise. We can focus on what we have instead of what we don't have. Chances are, we already have everything we need.

Sure, sometimes things break or wear out—and when that happens, we are left with at least three options:

Go without. This option is almost taboo in our culture. It seems radical to many people: Why would I go without when I could just buy a new one? Often this option is the best option, though: when we go without, it forces us to question our stuff—it forces us to discover whether or not we need it—and sometimes we discover life without it is actually better than before.

Repair it. Sometimes we can't necessarily go without. But, instead of running out and procuring Product X, we can attempt to repair the item first. You wouldn't buy a new car just because the brakes needed to be replaced, would you? The same goes for many other household items.

Replace it. As a last resort, we can replace things. But even when we do, we can do so mindfully: we can purchase used items, we can buy products from local businesses, or we can downgrade and still have what's necessary to live a fulfilling life.

11

10 MOST EXPENSIVE POSSESSIONS RULE

Have you ever stopped to consider how important your stuff is relative to everything else in your life? I bet it's less than you realize.

To illustrate, Ryan and I created the 10 Most Expensive Possessions Rule, aka the 10/10 Material Possessions Theory, based loosely on a thought experiment in the book *Spent: Sex, Evolution, and Consumer Behavior* by evolutionary psychologist Geoffrey Miller.

Take a moment to write down your ten most expensive material possessions from the last decade. Things like your car, your house, your jewelry, your furniture, and any other material possessions you own or have owned in the last ten years. The big ticket items.

Next to that list, make another top-ten list: the ten things that add the most value to your life. This list might include experiences like catching a sunset with a loved one, watching your kids play baseball, eating dinner with your parents, etc.

Be honest with yourself when you're making these lists: it's likely that both lists share *zero* things in common..

12

SELLING DEADLINE RULE

Last month, my wife and I tried to sell a set of dining chairs online. We tried eBay and Craigslist and Facebook and even the online bulletin board in our building. No luck. Maybe we didn't do a good enough job with the photos or description or timing of the post. But, more than likely, we priced them too high because we're all victims of the sunk-cost fallacy.

"Individuals commit the sunk-cost fallacy when they continue a behavior or endeavor as a result of previously invested resources (time, money, or effort)," according to Hal Arkes and Catherine Blumer in their 1985 study about sunk costs. And according to Christopher Olivola, an assistant professor of marketing at Carnegie Mellon's Tepper School of Business, in a recent interview with *Time* magazine, the sunk-cost effect, which pushes people to continue a behavior that no longer serves them, "becomes a fallacy if it's pushing you to do things that are making you unhappy or worse off."

In Rebecca's and my case, holding on to those chairs in perpetuity definitely makes us unhappy and worse off. Sure, we may have paid \$X for the chairs, and it's hard to accept, psychologically, that they're no longer worth what we paid; they're currently worth only what someone is willing to pay for them, which might be a mere fraction of the original purchase price, maybe even \$0.

The best rule I've been able to develop to get around the sunk-cost fallacy is the Selling Deadline Rule, which acts as a sort of shot clock for getting rid of possessions that are no longer serving me. Whenever I attempt to sell an item, I give myself 30 days to do whatever I can—online auctions, yard sales, consignment shops, asking friends, shouting from the rooftops. Throughout the month, I'll gradually lower the price if the item hasn't sold. But if I'm unsuccessful after 30 days, then I must accept that my time is now more valuable than the pittance I might receive if I eventually sell the items that are taking up precious space in my home (and mind). So, on Day 31, I donate the item to a friend or a responsible donation charity. (If you'd like to find a charity in your area that will pick up your donations for free, visit [**DonationTown.org**](https://www.donationtown.org).)

13

SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION RULE

Frequently, our material possessions cause more stress than we realize.

As we grow more and more burdened by past purchases, the discontent simmers until we reach a boiling point. But we needn't wait until the temperature is scalding to take action.

I'm reminded of one of The Minimalists' live events in Brooklyn at which a young man named David approached the microphone to ask his question: "I have a problem with saving too many unread articles on my phone. I save them one at a time—every article is something I think I want to read, but they always pile up." David pulled out his phone and held it up to show the crowd. "I have hundreds of unread articles, and it's stressing me out."

"How would you feel if you deleted all of them right now?" Ryan asked. "Do you think you'd regret it, or would you feel relieved?"

"I've never thought about just deleting them," David said. "But I think I'd feel relieved."

"Then let's delete them all. Right here. Right now," Ryan said.

A few people in the crowd offered words of encouragement and then cheers began: "Dee-leet-it! Dee-leet-it! Dee-leet-it!"

Right there, on the spot, even though he was visibly frightened, David found the "delete all" function, and, with a tap of the screen, all those unread articles were gone. He reached out to us a few weeks later to thank us (and the crowd) for nudging him in that

direction. He expressed relief and a newfound calm he didn't expect just from deleting some unread articles on his phone.

While it makes sense to cull our digital clutter, don't we do the same thing with our material possessions? Don't we accumulate one thing at a time until, all of a sudden, we have a hoard of things from which we get marginal joy at best—things that stress us out.

That's why we invented the Spontaneous Combustion Rule, which starts with a simple question: If this item spontaneously combusted, would I feel relieved? If so, give yourself permission to get rid of it.

The funny thing is that this rule can apply to anything from material possessions and digital clutter to careers and relationships. It's a question worth asking throughout all areas of our lives because it helps us better understand what's adding value and what we should walk away from.



14

WILLING TO WALK RULE

Are you prepared to walk away from *everything*? This rarely asked question, which piggybacks nicely with the previous rule, shapes one of the most important principles in my life: I call it the Willing to Walk Rule.

We are all familiar with the age-old hypothetical in which our home is burning and we must grab only the things that are most important to us. Certainly, most of us would not dash into the inferno and reach for material items first—we'd ensure the safety of our loved ones and pets. Then, once they were safe, we'd grab only the irreplaceable things: photos, hard drives, family heirlooms. Everything else would be lost in the pyre.

I like to look at this thought experiment differently, though, taking the theoretical a bit further. There is a scene in *Heat* in which Neil McCauley, played by Robert De Niro, says, "Allow nothing in your life that you cannot walk out on in 30 seconds flat." Although my life is nothing like McCauley's (he's the film's bad guy), I share his sentiment. Almost everything I bring into my life—possessions, ideas, habits, and even relationships—I must be able to walk away from at a moment's notice.

Many readers will disagree because this credo sounds crass. But I'd like to posit that it's the opposite: our preparedness to walk away is the ultimate form of caring. If I purchase new physical goods, I need to make certain I don't assign them too much meaning. Being able

to walk away means I won't ever get too attached to my belongings, and being unattached to stuff makes our lives tremendously flexible—filled with opportunity.

If I take on a new idea or habit, I do so because it has the potential to benefit my life. New ideas shape the future Me. Same goes for habits. Over time my ideas change, improve, and expand, and my current habits get replaced by new ones that continue to help me grow. Our readiness to jilt ideas or habits means we're willing to grow—we're willing to constantly pursue a better version of ourselves.

If I bring a new relationship into my world, I know I must earn their love, respect, and kindness. I also expect they, too, are willing to leave should I not provide the support and understanding they require. Thus, we both must work hard to contribute to the relationship. We must communicate and remain cognizant of each other's needs. And, above all, we must care. These fundamentals—love, communication, understanding, caring—build trust, which builds a stronger connection in the long run. It sounds paradoxical, but our willingness to walk away strengthens our bond with others. And the reverse stance—being chained by obligation to a relationship—is disingenuous, a false loyalty birthed from pious placation.

There are obvious exceptions to this rule—efforts we cannot easily abandon: a marriage, a business partnership, a career, a passion. The key is to have as few exceptions as possible.

Crucially, even these exceptions aren't exceptions. Marriages often end, as do businesses. People get laid off, and passions change over time. Even though we might not be able to walk away from these

endeavors in “30 seconds flat,” we can ultimately decamp when these situations no longer serve us.

Everything I allow into my life enters it deliberately. If my home was aflame, there’s nothing I own that can’t be replaced: All photos are scanned. All important files are backed up. And all the stuff has no real meaning. Similarly, I’m prepared to walk away from nearly anything—even the people closest to me—if need be. Doing so safeguards my continued growth and improves my relationships, both of which contribute to a fulfilling, meaningful life.

It was C.S. Lewis who, 50 years ago, eloquently said, “Don’t let your happiness depend on something you may lose.” In today’s material world, a world of fear-fueled clinging, his words seem more apropos than ever.

15

MINIMALIST GIFT GIVING RULE

There's always another holiday lurking somewhere around the corner: Valentine's Day. Mother's Day. Sweetest Day.

Birthdays. Christmas. We've programmed ourselves to give and receive gifts on these and many other holidays to show our love for one another.

We've been told that gift-giving is one of our "love languages." As a result, we've become consumers of love: "I love you, so here's this expensive shiny thing I bought!" Isn't it grotesque how we've commodified love?

Gift-giving is, by definition, transactional. But love is not a transaction. Love is transcendent: it transcends language and material possessions, and can be shown only by our thoughts, actions, and intentions.

Gift-giving is not a love language any more than Pig Latin is a Romance language. What we really mean is "contribution is a love language," which is a message I wholeheartedly support. We all want to contribute to the lives of the people we care about, and sometimes that involves buying them a gift they will appreciate—not out of obligation, but out of the desire to add value.

But often, a gift is just a lazy shortcut, one that doesn't have the same impact as an actual act of love. Intellectually, we all know that buying diamonds is not evidence of everlasting devotion. Commitment, trust, understanding—these are indications of devotion.



Perhaps Jonathan Franzen said it best: “Love is about bottomless empathy, born out of the heart’s revelation that another person is every bit as real as you are. To love a specific person, and to identify with his or her struggles and joys as if they were your own, you have to surrender some of your self.”

That doesn’t mean there’s something necessarily wrong with buying a gift for someone, but don’t fool yourself by associating that gift with love—love doesn’t work that way. Instead, associate it with contribution. And if a gift is the best way to contribute, then don’t let minimalism stand in your way. Enter: the Minimalist Gift Giving Rule, which says you can avoid physical gifts and still participate in the gift-giving process.

Presence is the best present. So, what if you decided to gift only experiences this year? How much more memorable will your holidays be? Consider these experiences: concert tickets, a home-cooked meal, tickets to a play or a musical, breakfast in bed, a back rub, a foot rub, a full-body massage, a holiday parade, walking or driving somewhere without a plan, spending an evening talking with no distractions, making-out under the mistletoe, visiting a festival of lights, cutting down a Christmas tree, watching a sunrise, skiing, snowboarding, sledding, dancing, taking your children to a petting zoo, making snow angels, making a batch of hot apple cider, taking a vacation together, watching a wintertime sunset.

What other experiences can you give to someone you care about? Your experiences build and strengthen the bond between you and the people you care about. Besides, don’t you think you’d find more value in these experiences than material gifts? Don’t you think your loved ones would find more value, too?



Personally, I now gift experiences more than anything else. And if I need to present an experience in a physical manner, I'll print it in full color on a thick piece of paper and wrap it in an ornate box with bows and ribbons and gift wrap to add a material element to the adventure. From time to time, I'll also donate to a charity in the name of the person "who has everything." Or if I feel the absolute need to give material goods, I prefer to gift consumables—a bottle of wine, a bar of gourmet dark chocolate, or a bag of coffee from a local roaster—instead of another unwanted widget.

Whatever I give, I do so deliberately. That's the point of the Minimalist Gift Giving Rule. For too long, I gifted out of obligation, attempting to make up for the time I didn't spend with the people I love. I did this for years: "Here's a necktie or a pair of cufflinks or an oven mitt because today is December 25th. Now what did you get me?" Usually, very little thought went into it. I felt obligated to give something—anything!—just for the sake of giving, without understanding why I was actually giving. I purchased gifts without asking any of the important questions: What's the purpose behind giving this particular gift? Will the recipient find value in this gift? Is this something they need? How could I make this more meaningful for both of us? These are important questions, but we rarely ask them because the answers aren't as easy as simply checking the box with a shiny new trinket.

However you celebrate your holidays this year, and regardless of what you give—presence, presents, or contribution—remember what you're actually trying to gift: a smile.



16

MINIMALIST
GIFT GETTING
RULE

Once you figure out how to best *give* gifts, it's equally important to understand how to best *receive* gifts with a minimalist mindset, which brings us to the Minimalist Gift Getting Rule.

The foundation of this rule is intuitive but surprising coming from a minimalist: if you want to get better gifts, you must ask for better gifts.

Now, I don't mean you should ask for more expensive gifts. Nor should you ask for physical gifts. What I mean is that the people who love you want to give you gifts. And that's okay. You can let them. But you must point them in the right direction so they can give you something meaningful. Instead of saying "no" to gifts, say "yes" to the right kind of gifts.

Tell people about the experiences you want to enjoy with them.
Tell people about your favorite coffeehouse or local bakery.
Tell people about your favorite charity and how they can donate in your name.

Wouldn't any of these feel better for both of you than another obligatory necktie, pair of shoes, or piece of jewelry?.



How to Use These Rules

There you have it: sixteen rules and tactics to live more like a minimalist.

Of course, it's worth noting that the rules that work for me may not work for you as they stand. These are simply Ryan's and my recipe for simple living. And like any recipe, you may need to adjust for taste. If the 30/30 Rule is too strict, or the 20/20 Rule is too inflexible, or the 90/90 Rule is too restrictive, then consider setting your own parameters based on your current comfort level.

It's important to get a little uncomfortable, though, because a bit of discomfort is required to build your letting-go muscles. As time goes by, and your muscles grow, you can continue to adjust the rules to challenge you. Before you know it, you might be "more of a minimalist" than The Minimalists. I've seen it happen dozens of times.

How about you: do you have any Minimalism Rules of your own? If so, please share with us on Twitter: **@TheMinimalists** . We'll share our favorites with the rest of the world.