

# What It's Like to Live as a Minimalist and Why You Should Consider It

Less is more!



During the Summer of my Junior year in College, I took on the project of helping my dad sell his house for profit. After my sister and I moved out, he wanted to move into an apartment instead of keeping up with the 2-story home.

Although I dearly loved that house, it definitely needed some work before it was ready to sell. The home needed repainted walls, new boards in the backyard deck, new tiling in the bathrooms, fixes for the creaking upstairs floor, and much more, but **there was a bigger unforeseen problem... getting rid of things!**

An apartment would only fit 20% of what my dad owned, which meant there was a lot of having to let go of "stuff." During the first day of clearing, I was combing through the garage that was piled ceiling high with junk and found a milk crate full of old flip phones. As I proceeded to toss the box of flip phones into the electronic recycle bin, I was flabbergasted when my dad resurrected the phones from their electronic graveyard. "We might need these someday!" he exclaimed.

He set aside the outdated phones and frantically left to work on another area of the house. Although I'm not proud of it, I threw that box of flip phones back into their graveyard figuring that once he moved, they would never cross his mind again. (I was right!)

**Although you probably don't have a useless box of flip phones laying around in your dorm or apartment, I guarantee you, you own stuff that is equivalent.** Maybe it's your trumpet from band collecting dust in your closet or your collection of old makeup, lotions, and hair styling products that have been sitting in your bathroom untouched (and likely [expired](#)) for years.

For me, my box-of-flip-phones equivalent was old t-shirts, shoes, tank tops, and clothing that I was waiting to fit back into once I lost the good old freshman 15 (more like freshmen 30... thank you meal plan).

**At first, I was reluctant to donate these items**, trying to give them a purpose for taking precious space in my small closet, but finally, I realized my attachment to old t-shirts and uncomfortable clothing had no validity. I got myself to donate and sell half of everything in my closet.

Looking at my closet now, it's not overstuffed like it was before. Blouses, pants, and dresses hang neatly in a row with free space on either side. I can see everything I own at a glance and I feel confident in every piece that I kept. Staring at this decluttered space gives me a similar feeling of zen and relaxation to the one I get during meditation at Friday Yoga. In fact, letting go of things has been an unexpected source of freedom that put me on the path **to my new lifestyle as a minimalist.**

## What is a Minimalist?

Maybe you've seen [The Minimalism Documentary](#) or read [The Minimalist](#) blog by Joshua Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus, or listened to your favorite fashion blogger talk about the items she has in her [capsule wardrobe](#). While reading the morning news, you might have skimmed a human interest piece about a person or couple selling their belongings to live in a [tiny home](#) or to travel the country in a van.

If you haven't, you've probably already connected the context clues to guess that *minimalism* has something to do with simplifying one's life by living with less.

But, why would you want less stuff? Well... **by acquiring something, there is a trade-off.** Stuff needs upkeep, costs money, takes up space, or requires storage. By practicing minimalism, you make a conscious effort to only own the things that

provide value to your life. The best generalization of the minimalist lifestyle is given to us by Joshua Becker, author of [Becoming Minimalist](#). As he says,

“Minimalism is the intentional promotion of the things we value most and the removal of everything that distracts us from it.”

The minimalism lifestyle doesn't have a hard and fast definition that can be found in Webster's dictionary. There isn't a website with guidelines ruling that you can only own 50 things to be considered a minimalist. From everything I've read and considered, minimalism is a mind frame. Minimalism means different thing to different people and through deep reflection, **you can decide your own personal definition of minimalism**. I've done just this myself.

## How I Got Started with Minimalism

After my closet clean-out gave me that breath of fresh air, I walked around my apartment scoping out other areas of my life I could consolidate.

### Things I Organized (Physical):

- I donated anything I had duplicates of (unless it was earbuds because I lose those things like one a month!)
- Threw everything away in my junk drawer
- Stored all my important personal documents in a portable file box (not online, because of security)
- Stored all non-personal important documents on [Google Drive](#)
- Created dedicated hobby storage containers/spaces for workout stuff, craft stuff, and electronics
- Donated all the useless kitchen gadgets taking up counter space
- Got rid of anything else I hadn't use within six months

### Things I Organized (Mental):

- Set limits on time spent on Social Media or time scrolling through the web
- Set aside personal time for hobbies and recuperating from stress (If you're an [introvert](#) / part-time extrovert like me, this is especially important!)
- Made plans to eat out less or buy smaller portions when doing so
- Let go of or minimized toxic relationships

**Of course I'm not perfect**, I still have way too many shoes (this minimalist owns 14 pairs of shoes with no shame), but I've reduced my belongings enough that if I

had to move today, I could pack all my things into my Chevy Cruze in an hour and be on my way. This is convenient because college means moving a lot.

My living space doesn't look sparse. I have Urban Outfitters tapestries decorating the living room and colorful glass and metal star lanterns hanging from the ceiling giving off an inviting glow. People always comment on how clean my place is, but I really don't spend much time tidying up since I honestly don't have a lot of things.

The benefits of minimalism are many: **I've found that since I've started practicing minimalism, my living space doesn't become cluttered like it used to, I'm more organized, things don't go missing as much, I'm not going on shopping sprees, and I'm saving money.** Of course, these results have as much to do with building habits associated with my new mind frame as they do with the actual reduction of things I own.

Just because I'm a minimalist, that doesn't mean I don't appreciate nice things or buying something new. (Remember, I write for a fashion blog!) I just buy only the things I need or if I buy something I really want, I make sure to donate, sell, recycle, or trash its duplicate when I get home.

## What Minimalism Means to Me

Although some people view minimalism as a passing trend or fad, I don't see it disappearing from my life anytime soon. This may have to do with my life experiences. In part, I believe the reason I've latched on to minimalism so much is due to the 2008 Recession.

During that time, my family and I were living in our dream home in an upper-middle-class suburb of Fort Worth, Texas (the same house I helped my dad sell during my Junior year). After 2008, the country was going through some difficult financial times. My neighbors were disappearing one by one, leaving behind only foreclosure signs on their front lawns.

My friends' families seemed to become bigger as their relatives moved in due to job losses. My own family eventually needed help, too, resulting in family friends moving in and renting out the guest bedroom and upstairs living area to help with monthly payments.

With the support of family and friends, we were very fortunate during the Great Recession, but **it did change my concept of the American Dream.**

Today, I live modestly and reserve most of my income for savings, investing, or spending on family and friends. Instead of the idealized version of success we are

sold through consumer advertisements, such as owning new cars, the huge house with the acre of backyard, or the latest and greatest smartphone or product, I place most of my value in the people I care about, self-development, and security.

## Why is College the Best Time to Consider Minimalism?

College is a growing experience as much as it's an educational experience. Most college students are living on their own for the first time while navigating a sea of decision making, responsibilities, and finding out who they are.

Just like college is the best time to [find your own sense of style](#), it's also the best time to really figure out how you want to live your life and develop your own approach to day-to-day living. You have to find what works for you, usually through trial and error.

So don't be afraid to experiment and reach outside of your comfort zone. Try out aspects of minimalism and if you don't like it, at least you've learned something new about yourself!

### What Do You Think?

If you're curious about becoming a minimalist, check back in a couple of weeks to read the second part of this minimalist series, ***10 Beginner Tips on Minimalism***. I'll share my processes to help you guys get started becoming minimalists.

Are you considering becoming a minimalist? Or are you already one? If so, how do you live your minimalist lifestyle? **Let us know your opinion on Minimalism in the comments below!**