



# simplify your space

create order &  
reduce stress



**MARCIA RAMSLAND**

*Author of Simplify Your Life*

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create order & reduce stress

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# Simplify Your Personal Space

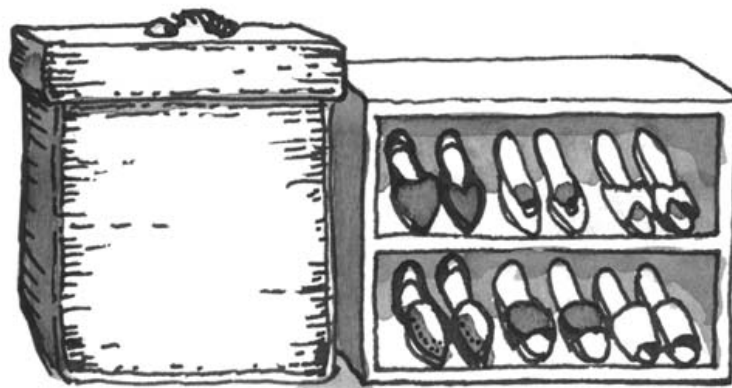
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Chapter 5—Bedroom

Chapter 6—Bedroom Closet

Chapter 7—Bathroom

Once you've covered the visible spaces of your house, it's time to give your personal space the time and attention it needs. In the midst of your busy life, you may be overlooking these three busy spaces: bedrooms, the closets, and the bathroom. The goal is to simplify these spaces so everyone can get an easy start in the morning and come home to order later in the day.



# Simplify Your Bedroom

The bedroom is a sanctuary, the place where you retreat after a long, hard day. Of all the rooms in your home, this one should be the most free of distractions.

—MERYL STARR

**T**he most restful room in your home is the one we often give the least attention—the bedroom. This is the place from which we launch our day and to which we retreat at night.

Now why would simplifying this room be so hard to do? As someone once said, if all there was to organizing a bedroom is making the bed, it would be the easiest room in the house to keep clean. Actually, once you make the bed the room is 50 to 70 percent clean, so that is an excellent way to start every day!

My client Mary Ann's bedroom looked like she had just hosted a teenage sleepover. Another client couple had the opposite problem—nothing but a bed frame and an old bedspread graced the room. Is there a balance between form and function for your bedroom? Or is it like Mary Ann said: "It's my room, so who cares?"

You should care. Waking up to a clean, organized room has a positive effect on your outlook. It is the one place to find comfort before facing the world for the day. Don't let your bedroom decline just because it's not a "company showpiece." It's your most personal space, so let's make it one of your favorite spaces and the foundation of an orderly life.

## Create a Plan

A fair number of people dive right into organizing the bedroom and end up with stacks of items on the floor they intend to deliver, donate, or discard. But does that approach work? As a general rule, no. You want a plan that will leave the bedroom clear of clutter. You can do it with only a one-time cleanup plus a small step each day so you can finish the room in no time at all.

Our plan for simplifying your bedroom has three steps. We will deal with the largest to the smallest visible areas. Our goal is a peaceful and pleasant room to sleep well and relax in.

These spaces you can easily assess include:

- Large surfaces: bed and floor
- Flat surfaces: dresser tops, nightstands, under the bed
- Interior surfaces: drawers, shelves, boxes

## Simplify Your Bedroom

### Motivation:

- ☑ I'd like to clear the clutter out of my bedroom.
- ☑ I want to my bedroom to be a restful haven.
- ☑ My bedroom is the last thing I decorated, and I need to finish.

### Supplies:

- ☑ Wastebasket and recycle bin for items to be discarded
- ☑ Three boxes for things to put away, donate, and sell
- ☑ Pen and notepad

### Time Estimate:

2–3 hours

### Reward:

A peaceful room to wake up in each morning and return to each night.

If you are like many people who are often in a rush, your bedroom is the place you tend to lay things down, instead of putting them away. Or it's the place to hide Christmas presents, put the sewing machine, or stash a desk for some quiet workspace.

Take a moment to stand at the doorway to your bedroom and ask the following questions:

1. What needs the most attention to simplify this bedroom? The bed, the floor clutter, flat surfaces?
2. Is the room visually clean but the drawers and shelves full of clutter you'd like to let go of?
3. Is it a pretty room, or does it need a facelift with new paint and bedspread?

Now, let's begin to work our plan with your answers in mind.

## Approach It by Sections

The goal of simplifying your bedroom is having a restful, enjoyable space at the beginning and end of the day. You can do these short steps in ten minutes a day until you are finished, or you could set aside a day and put it together.

Start with the large and most visible surfaces, such as the bed and floor.

### Bed

Begin by washing the bedding and making the bed. While you are at it, vacuum the mattress and turn it over (if it does so). Now that the bed is made, half or more of your room is truly clean. Nothing feels better than a freshly made bed.

If your bedspread looks worn or you need new pillow shams or a headboard, you may want to start looking for new bedding. Add a matching headboard or pictures over the headboard to make an attractive focal point.

### Floor

The next largest surface in your bedroom is the floor, so be sure to vacuum the floor often, especially before you begin working on the drawers and shelves. Sort through any items that may be in piles around your bedroom until you can see a clean floor.



Do you need new carpet or area rug? If you can work it into your budget, now would be a good time to treat yourself to a floor covering that makes your toes happy to be barefoot each night.

## Piles

Piles on the floor in the bedroom usually shrink the size of the room. So empty the contents of cardboard boxes, laundry baskets, and bags by dealing with each pile. Always keep this in mind: *one pile is the beginning of losing control of a neat room.*



### **SPACE-SAVING TIP #12**

Stand at the doorway to your bedroom and look for clean, uncluttered dresser tops, floor, and neatly made bed to keep your bedroom restful.

## Clothes

Cut your bedroom cleanup time in half by putting your clothes immediately back on hangers, folded in the drawer, or in the clothes hamper. Nothing makes a bedroom look messy faster than clothes draped across a chair or piled on the floor.

The same goes for clean laundry. Put clean clothes away before the next meal so you never walk in to see clothes sitting out.

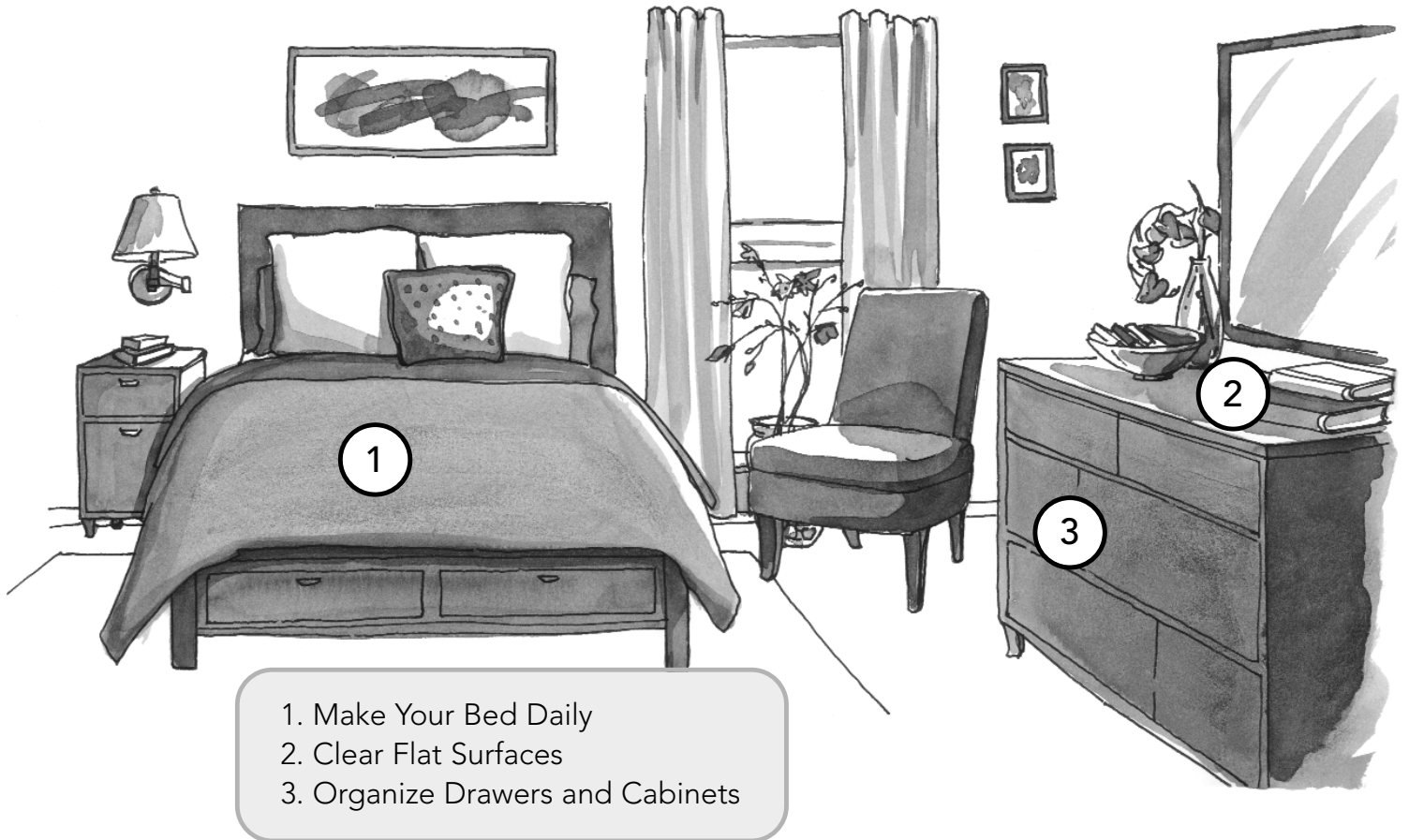
## Dresser and Nightstands

Now that the bed is made and the floor is clear, look at the flat surfaces in your bedroom to purge the clutter and put away “homeless” items.

How many flat surfaces do you have in the bedroom: a dresser and a nightstand or more? Count them now. This is the number you want to clear and organize this week. These furniture pieces can make your bedroom restful or stressful.

Begin by emptying and dusting each dresser top one at a time, putting useful and attractive objects in the back third of each space. This allows a clear line of sight as your eye sweeps over the room and it looks organized and peaceful.

The problems occur when books stack up, clothes don't get put away, magazines are temporarily set down, and watches and coins clutter the dresser top. Be careful! Keep your dresser surfaces clean by containerizing items in the top drawers and designating places for the “homeless” items cluttering up the visual space in the room.



### SPACE-SAVING TIP #13

Choose several types of lighting for your bedroom to create an inviting ambience—a bedside reading light, soft dresser lighting, and candles to beckon you home at night.

## Nightstands

Keep current reading material, decorative items, and a reading lamp on your nightstand. The challenge is to stick with one or two books until they are finished and keep the surface intentionally organized with only your clock, music, and current magazine or book. Keep just what you will use, and designate places elsewhere for the excess items.

Keep your nightstand from becoming a leaning tower with stacks of books you have started but haven't finished. Limit your reading to two books at a time, and store the rest on bookshelves. Place magazines neatly in a magazine holder or basket, and be sure to recycle previous issues.

## Under the Bed

The space under your bed is perfect for under-the-bed boxes to store a holiday wrapping center or out-of-season clothes. If you have drawers under your bed, you can store current reading materials out of sight too.

## Dresser Drawers

Before you open each dresser drawer, think about what category of items you would *like* to be inside. Then open the drawer, take everything out, and sort as you go into three piles: “Keep” items on the far right in front of you, “maybe keep” items in the middle behind the drawer, and “get rid of” items to your left. Have two receptacles on your left: a trash bag and a donation bag.

Start from the top drawer of a dresser and work downward . Put in gift boxes as dividers or buy containers that fit the drawer to keep items from sliding into a heap.

Once you put in your dividers, put items you use most often in the front, things used less often in the middle, and storage items in the back. Leave 20 percent of the visible space empty for a spacious feeling and room for new things inside the drawer.

Then deliver the trash bag and donation bag. Keep the drawer neat and put something pretty in it to make you smile when you open it. You’ll be more likely to keep it organized.



### **SPACE-SAVING TIP #14**

Retire to bed a few minutes early to enjoy a magazine or novel. You can get through an amazing number of books by reading one chapter each night.

## Shelves

Sort one shelf at a time from the top shelving down. Begin by removing everything and wiping off the shelf. Now sort the items on your bed or clean floor: “keep” items to the right, “maybe keep” items in the middle, and “get rid of” items on the left into a trash bag or donation bag.

Put back items by categories: books together, labeled magazine holders on shelving, decorative items displayed. Leave space between items and add a plant, figurine, or clock to blend “hardscape” items with “softscape” items to make an interesting landscape on your shelving in the bedroom.

## Armoire

A closed armoire or chest can become a clutter space unless you sort it regularly. Again, start from the top down and go through shelf by shelf, and drawer by drawer. Once you return your armoire to its organized state, you can breeze through getting ready each morning.

If your armoire houses your TV, DVDs, and CDs, cull through your media collection so your bedroom armoire contains only the top ten tunes and movies you currently enjoy. Make sure your TV is positioned so that it is easy to see, and make your sound system part of the restful atmosphere of your bedroom.

A chest at the foot of the bed is a great place to store blankets and heirlooms. If you have one, empty it out and put back only what you use and foresee as heirlooms to pass on to your family. Don't keep anything you don't like or anything that is stained. Fix it up or get rid of it.

## Lighten Up and Let Go

Let the bedroom be the one personal space you stay on top of for order and peace—your personal haven of rest each day. Move it from stressful to restful by clearing the surfaces, ordering the drawers, and letting go of excess clutter.

A good cleaning in the fall and spring when you clean your clothes closet will keep this room in order. Maintain that order by developing a lifelong habit of making your bed each day to keep your space in order. It only takes a minute and a half to make the bed for sixteen hours of order in this room!

### Bedroom Checklist

- 1. Is the bed made and easy to make each day?
- 2. Is the floor clear of piles and clothes?
- 3. Are the dresser tops clear on the front two-thirds and attractively arranged in the back?
- 4. Are under-the-bed boxes storing useful items in usable containers?
- 5. Are the dresser drawers organized, and do the drawers open easily?

- 6. Are the shelves organized and attractive?
- 7. Is the armoire or chest neatly housing items that are important to me now?
- 8. Is the TV easy to see and the sound system part of the restful atmosphere?
- 9. Are there any piles that need to be put away?
- 10. Is the bedroom attractive, restful, and clutter free?

### *Tips from "The Decorating Coach," Susan Wells*

Add punch with a pillow: that's the secret weapon that designers use to add the "wow factor" to rooms. Large sizes are in, and pillows are the least expensive way to redecorate a room. Pillows can introduce a new accent color without changing the main elements. Repeat the same fabric in other areas like a drapery tieback or table runner.

Incorporate tassels or buttons onto your existing pillows to transform them from ho-hum to show stopping. Make a pillow or ask a friend to help. Just one yard of top-of-the-line fabric creates a couple of pillows that will become the focal point of your room. Watch for sales or shop at discount outlets to pick up eye-catching designs.

## Manage It Simply

Clutter can steal the restfulness out of what should be the most peaceful room of your home. Keep your bedroom clean with a quick two-minute pickup each morning and evening. When the seasons change for spring and fall, organize a drawer a day from top to bottom of the dressers to change over to the next season's clothes.

- Patty was a well-organized lady who had a "center" for each of her interests and projects. The problem was her sewing projects, office desk, and ironing

basket turned her bedroom from a retreat into a barricade to keep the children out. And her husband didn't feel welcome either.

We reclaimed Patty's bedroom by moving the sewing machine to the closet, the ironing board to the laundry room, and placing a freestanding divider around the desk. Her bedroom started to feel like a home instead of a mini apartment.

- Joan, a busy homeschooling mom with six children, collected all the single socks in a large laundry basket by the side of her bed. What had become a project sitting in her bedroom became a permanent nightstand of stacked baskets—until we spread them on the bed and paired the matching socks. We found one large basket full of white socks and one equally large for colored socks. She had intended to sort them, but never seemed to have time.

After half an hour of matching socks, she let the unmatched single socks (and two laundry baskets) go. Her bedroom improved dramatically, and so did romance when all the undone projects were banned from the bedroom!

- George was a technology fan and had been since the 1970s. The problem was that his equipment was also from the '70s: large speakers, an old VCR, and two partially working radios and cassette player with a portable CD player rigged up to boot. Rather than buy new equipment, George continued to add to his collection and focused on “function” without much thought to “form.”

After much discussion, he finally compromised with his wife by buying a high-end new system for Christmas. The problem was still parting with the old equipment. But since electronics sell well at garage sales, he eventually let his vintage equipment go for some cash.

## Review: The CALM Bedroom Approach

### Create a Plan

- ❑ Large surfaces first
- ❑ Flat surfaces second
- ❑ Interior spaces third

### Approach It by Sections

- ❑ Clothes drawers
- ❑ Jewelry drawers
- ❑ Activity areas of reading, exercise, crafts

### Lighten Up and Let Go

- ❑ Charity donations: extra bedding, knickknacks, or unwanted jewelry
- ❑ Clothes: Put in the closet, hamper, or donate
- ❑ Papers, CDs, DVDs: move to the office or family room

### Manage It Simply

**Daily**—Every morning, make your bed and put away out-of-place items on top of dressers and on the floor in a two-minute sweep.

**Weekly**—Clean, dust, vacuum, and straighten the bedroom at least once a week to keep it attractive and inviting.

**Monthly**—Review the contents of your drawers and shelves once a month, and keep giving away excess until these spaces are easy to maintain.

Your bedroom should be the most restful place in your home. I encourage you to give it the attention it needs to best serve the “bookends” of your day. If you keep working on your bedroom one step at a time, you will soon have an organized and pleasant space to spend time each day.

*Bedrooms are to the home what the easy chair is to the end of a hard day.*

—MAXINE ORDESKY