

# Something's Gotta Give

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Holiday season is when you tend to realize just how space-challenged your living quarters are. With all the shopping catalogs, cards, presents and decorations that accumulate, the clutter factor gets ramped up to an almost unmanageable level. And let's not forget the stacks of Junior's art projects teachers send home just ahead of the long vacation. (Thanks for that.) Time to step up and protect your apartment's precious square footage.



Barbara Reich, the founder of Resourceful Consultants, LLC, is a personal organizer extraordinaire. With her "tough love" approach and ability to comfortably speak her mind (She's the antithesis of the "yes man/woman"), she can whip your home into shape before, during and after the December influx. Reich offers some tips for "taming the clutter."

**No goodie** - The little 75-cent party favors that come in goodie bags can overrun your house. Do the math. A preschooler probably attends about 20 parties; that's 20 bags, each with a minimum of five favors, for a total of 100 random plastic toys (non-working yo-yos, animals that are easily squashed and never regain their original shapes). Reich suggests paring down and keeping *one* box of these.

**Artist in residence** - Get an art file box that's 12 x 15 x 3 to store your child's artwork. (Reich likes the art files at [exposuresonline.com](http://exposuresonline.com).) If the box fills up mid-year, edit your selections (translation: prioritize and eliminate.) As for your DC's cumbersome 3D masterpieces from art class, Reich says take a picture of your kid with said masterpieces and then bin 'em.

**Love actually** - Reich's advice may sound harsh. However, this mother of twins does realize the importance of preserving the sentimental. To that end, she recommends you also include the following in the art file: the family holiday card, a school pic, a class list, the child's birthday party invitation and ticket stubs from important events (World Series, first Broadway show, first Nutcracker).

**School daze** - With all the school worksheets that come home, you could probably wallpaper a large portion of your apartment with them. Reich says there's no point in keeping these. "Not to be overly callous - most kids are going to learn to add, subtract, and divide. You don't need evidence of this," she comments, adding, "Think: When I move to Florida, am I going to want to take these with me? So then you wait 30 years to throw this stuff away!" Put another way, "Do you really want the cotton ball taped to construction paper that *you* did in nursery school?"

**Where the wild things aren't** - Exile the stuffed animals before your child gets too attached. In the meantime, keep only a few and get rid of the rest. It's already a jungle out there; no need to replicate the scene in your apartment.

**Toy story** - Some toys are far too awkward and bulky to store unless you're lucky enough to have your own full-fledged playroom with loads of closets and shelves. So, unfortunately, the pirate ship (princess castle and barn) must be left out on the floor. If your darling daughter hasn't played with these "always on display" toys in 18 months, clear the decks. Reich's motto: "You can have a museum of toys in your house, or you can have a house." Words to live by.

**Larger than life** - Grandparents are all about the bigger, the better when it comes to presents. Not so helpful. Be proactive. Advise grandparents on gift ideas for your gang. Otherwise, you might be the not-so-proud owner of a life-size plush baby giraffe.

**Books a million** - Around ages five and six, kids' interests and reading levels change dramatically. So if your daughter is over her princess phase, take those books out of circulation and donate them (unless she's got a younger sister).

**Some no-brainers** - Unload your unused wedding presents (Be honest. Have you *ever* used that picnic basket?) Throw away the holiday catalogs (in a recycling receptacle) before leaving the mailroom. Sell the jewelry from your old boyfriend.

Outward bound!

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