



# Feng Shui: First clear the clutter

*By Jini Rayne*

Feng shui, the Ancient Chinese Art of Placement, is the study of how our home and work environments have a profound effect on our daily lives. In the Chinese language, feng shui (pronounced fung shway) translates into “wind” and “water,” firmly grounding a relationship to the environment.

By properly placing objects in the home or office, ch’i, or life force energy, can be changed in order to quickly bring about resolutions to problems ranging from improving a relationship to selling a home.

While there are many instances when engaging a feng shui expert is the most effective way to harmonize your environment, there are also some steps you can take on your own to begin this process. There are practical principles in feng shui that anyone can follow. Many involve

common sense, others are learned, and others involve using intuition. Combining these with a reasonable aesthetic sense can give profound results to those who follow this path.

One of the quickest, though not necessarily the easiest, ways to positively affect the feng shui in any space is to deal with the clutter there. Clutter is the accumulation of things that are no longer needed or loved but which are being kept anyway. It affects the flow of ch’i and the flow of life. It brings down energy levels and gets in the way. It doesn’t have a real place or real use in your home. Clutter is sometimes tied to identity, and can represent aspects of your life.

Clutter is not necessarily related to the actual object. What is clutter for one person may not be clutter to someone else. Something is

not clutter if you love it but it doesn’t look right where it has been placed. Changing its position may solve the problem. Clutter is not anything that you use or love. There are three kinds of clutter.

Physical clutter is what we think of first when the word clutter is mentioned. It is any object that you don’t love or use or that brings down your energy level.

*It includes:*

- Clothes that don’t fit or that you don’t like,
- That lamp that doesn’t work that keeps prodding you with guilt for not having fixed it yet (or anything that is broken or has parts missing),
- Unwanted gifts,
- All those documents that are no longer needed but which you keep “just in case”,



- Personal letters and Christmas cards from people you no longer even remember,
- Collections of recipes you will never get around to cooking,
- Half finished and never started projects, expired coupons, bottles of expired medicines or vitamins, piles of magazines and newspapers you will never get around to reading,
- Partially used bottles of old makeup or cosmetics you no longer use,
- Stuff which “might be useful some day” but which you know in your heart never will,
- Too many things for the size of a particular space.
- Computer clutter, files and programs you no longer use or need.

Two other areas of clutter include mental clutter that you carry around in your head and emotional clutter that you carry in your heart. Physical,

emotional and mental clutter are all interconnected. If your mind is cluttered, then your work and living spaces are likely to be cluttered too.

If your heart is cluttered, you will find it difficult to focus your mind. If your workspace is cluttered, it will be more difficult to organize your thoughts. Removing clutter can be very freeing. It symbolically removes things that have been weighing you down.

Volumes could be written about the effects of clutter.

*Clutter can:*

- Make you feel disorganized;
- Create chaos;
- Be depressing;
- Keep us emotionally bound up with the past;
- Clog your physical space;
- Limit your possibilities;
- Take time to maintain and to sort through to find what you want;
- Cost money, time and energy to

maintain and store;

- Be a psychological drain reinforcing negative feelings.

Clutter is often linked to our identity. Throwing away clutter can feel like throwing away a part of ourselves. People keep clutter out of habit, for sentimental reasons (but your memories are always within you), because it is an inherited pattern of behavior, as a status symbol, out of fear of the future (“I just might need it”), because it represents unfulfilled dreams, because they are responsible for their things or are being thrifty, or because they don’t feel enough just as they are.

It can be hard to clear clutter because it takes time and effort and we are all busy people. There are also issues of dealing with getting rid of things that we have been given or inherited or upon which we spent a lot of money. Getting rid of clutter frees up energy for living in the present. When you remove clutter in your home, you remove clutter from



your life. This does not mean that you cannot have anything from your past or that you should not be prepared for the future. It just means that we need to let go of anything that no longer suits us in order to have plenty of space and energy available for the here and now.

Some practical ideas for clearing clutter include giving back everything that you have borrowed, getting rid of duplicates and thinking twice about buying anything. If you are in doubt about buying something, either don't do it or wait until the next day to see if you still want or need it. Do allow yourself to have one junk drawer for all those things that don't yet have a home. Just don't let that drawer grow into a whole desk or room full of junk. Sort through it occasionally to find good homes for items that deserve them and then toss out the real junk.

Do pace yourself when clearing clutter. Some folks like to hang a crystal over the space to be cleared ahead of time to get chi circulating there to facilitate the process. Start with just a small area or even one drawer and then you can build upon your success and do another at another time. It helps to get organized before a clutter clearing session. Have boxes (labeled file, relocate [to other rooms or areas], put back [into this space], donate, recycle, and unsure), markers, sticky notes, clear zip-lock bags (for small tedious items like paper clips and small change), and file folders handy. Decide on a time limit for the whole process and set a timer for one half of the allotted time. Begin sorting things into categories. When you feel torn over whether or not to let go of an item, put it into the unsure box.

When the timer goes off, reset it for the remaining time and spend this time bringing closure to the process. Put the things in the relocate box

into the places where they belong. Pack up the things in the donate box and make the call to have them picked up or load them into your car to drop off where they are going. Make a time on your schedule to drop them off so that they don't continue to ride around in your car. The goal is to bring closure to all of the boxes except for the unsure box. And when the timer goes off, look around and appreciate what you have accomplished. Decide what your next step in removing clutter will be and schedule a time on your calendar. Finish up by scheduling a time on your calendar to go through the unsure box. Choose a time when you can be quiet and slow and when you can allow your feelings to come up. Plan to do this with a friend, partner, therapist, or your journal. Think about what each object represents for you.

Does it increase or decrease your life force energy? Will you gain more by getting rid of the object than you do by keeping it?

Clearing clutter is one of the fastest ways to produce transformation in your life, but do proceed carefully. Clearing too much too fast can provoke a healing crisis. If unsure about an item, ask yourself if you love it. If not, it may be time for it to move on. You should enjoy your possessions. Go slowly and carefully and your entire life can change softly, easily and magically.

It is particularly important to clear your clutter if you are in process of selling or purchasing a home. When selling your home, the more you clear out, the roomier and more appealing your home will seem to prospective buyers. It is difficult for most people to envision their own possessions fitting into a

space if that space seems crowded to them. When purchasing a new home, there is no point in expending the labor and expense involved with packing and moving items you no longer use or love.

For a more thorough treatment of this subject, I recommend **Clear Your Clutter with Feng Shui** by Karen Kingston.

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