

Step 4 Two Q's. Clear Space

Kerryn Simmons Coaching





The Five Steps.

Step 4 Two Questions

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Clutter Crew

Asking the two decluttering questions is the fourth step in the Five Step Progress Only method.

How

In Step 4 we pick up each item one at a time and make a final decision and follow it all the way through.

- We ask Question 1 and follow through
- If we can't answer Question 1, we ask Question 2 and follow through

Why

So far we have completed three steps and through that process we have removed a number of items. Those three steps did not require a lot of mental work. They did not require decisions about how to classify something or whether to keep something. We were simply looking for things that we knew were trash, we knew had homes elsewhere, we knew we wanted to donate. With those items we discarded them, put them back where they belonged, or took them to a charity.

Those steps are completed without decision making to maximise decision making bandwidth for Steps 4 and 5. Those steps re-familiarise us with what's in the space. Hopefully the clutter in the zone we are clearing has decreased and what's left is not as daunting. Over time as we keep applying the container concept and discern our personal clutter threshold we will find that we get to steps 4 and 5 less often.

Now we reach the stage where clearing our space requires some decision making. What's left in the zone are now:

- items that belong there; or
- items that ended up there because we didn't know where else to put them; or
- items we skipped in Steps 1, 2 and 3.

Step 4 is how we create a home for everything.

When

If we follow this method we can clear our space with whatever amount of time and physical, mental and emotional bandwidth we have available, whether that's one minute, one hour, one day or one week. That's because we can stop at any time and we will have made progress.

Select a zone

A zone is a space within a room to focus on. This may be a shelf, drawer, cupboard or box. It's better to start small and practice the steps in defined areas, rather than attempting to clear the whole room in one go. As each zone is cleared it builds our decluttering muscles and increases our momentum.

In Step 4 we pick up each item one at a time and ask Question 1.

Question 1

- If I was looking for this [name of item], where would I look for it first?

At this point we need to trust our instincts. It doesn't matter if it's not where other people might store the item. It doesn't matter if it seems illogical. It doesn't matter if we haven't been keeping it there yet. This is all about where we would intuitively look for an item.

When we have our answer:

- Take It There Now

If we answer the first decluttering question with something along the lines of "I'm not sure" or "I don't know", then (and only then) we ask the second decluttering question.

Question 2

If I needed this [name of item], would it occur to me I already had it?

There are three answers to this question:

- Yes
- No
- Not sure/Don't know

If we answer **Yes** it would occur to me, we need to go back to question 1 and think about if our home was perfectly under control and fully functioning where would we look for this item first, even if we didn't expect it to be there, when we have our answer we Take It There Now.

The beauty of keeping items in the place we would naturally look for it first, is that the next time we need that item we simply ask ourself "where would I look for [item] first?" and if we have built the habit of Taking It There Now it will likely be there.

If we answer **No**, it would not occur to me that I already had it, our best option is to donate or discard the item.

Why? Because when our homes are cluttered we don't have a place for everything and we forget what items we have.



In this scenario when we need an item and it doesn't occur to us that we already have it, what happens is that we end up:

- making do without it (so we may as well not have it)
- adapting something else we have and using that instead (so we may as well not have it)
- borrowing it (so we may as well not have it)
- buying it again and adding to our clutter (so now we have a duplicate)

In effect even though we have the item, we don't really. Better to donate it now and free up your space because saying yes to this item, means saying no to something else.

If we answer **Not sure/Don't know** the same approach applies: discard or donate it. If we end up needing that same item: buy, borrow or hire it.

A place for everything and everything in its place

Remember every item that we choose to keep in our home requires a designated space for our homes to function well. Most of us know where our toothbrush is located in our home. That knowledge takes up a lot less mental space than trying to remember where something is kept.

It may seem like knowing where all the thousands of items in our home are all located would add a huge mental load, but when we are under our clutter threshold and we are putting things where we would naturally look for them first, it actually reduces our mental load. It's having items crammed into every spot or piles of items on tables, in baskets, bags and boxes and not knowing exactly what is in them all that adds to our mental strain.

Congratulations

You've completed Step 4. That's huge. Take a bow. You deserve it.

Acknowledgement

The Five Step Progress Only No Mess techniques were devised by my coach Dana K. White. They work alongside my bodywork and mindset techniques to form the three pillars of my Left Handed Decluttering approach for ease, calm and clarity.

Related resources

- [The Five Steps | Step 1 Trash](#)
- [The Five Steps | Step 2 Easy Stuff](#)
- [The Five Steps | Step 3 Donations](#)
- [The Five Steps | Step 5 Make It Fit](#)

Support

If you want bespoke help implementing my Left Handed Decluttering approach, please book a free Strategy Session or sign up for a Clear Space program.



