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## Tackling Your Bookshelves, Paperwork, and the Garage by Kirsten Sharpe

### 1. Overflowing Bookshelves

Let's talk about "Kirsten's 50% Rule." Tackle one shelf at a time: remove everything and place it on the floor or a table. Wipe the shelf clean, then only put half of it back. The rest gets donated, sold, or discarded. Books you started but didn't finish—and didn't love—don't go back. Neither do most of the books you've already read. Apply the same rule to knick-knacks, candles, seashells, DVDs, and VHS tapes. A cleaner, more spacious bookshelf brings a calming, open feel to your space.

Let go of guilt when letting go of books. You can sell them at Half Price Books or donate them to Better World Books, Resale to the Rescue, or your favorite local charity. Let someone else enjoy them. Resale to the Rescue also accepts collectibles, DVDs, VHS tapes, and small decorative items.

### 2. The Home Office (or That Paper-Piled Corner in the Kitchen)

Whether it's a full room or just the catch-all counter, start by tackling any paper stacks. Take them to a comfy spot and go through them. Keep only what's truly essential. If you use a digital calendar, enter appointments and reminders right away. For filing, set up two boxes: one marked "Shred" and one "Recycle." As you go through your file cabinet, you'll find that many once-important papers are no longer relevant. If you can scan and store a document electronically, do it.

Toss old user manuals—most are now available online. Recycle anything without sensitive information, and shred the rest. If your shredder's too small, drop papers off at Office Depot, UPS, or FedEx, where they'll shred by weight. You might also find a free community shredding event in your area.

For old electronics—typewriters, calculators, cameras, TVs, camcorders, etc.—take them to St. Joseph County Household Hazardous Waste (828 Kerr Street, South Bend). It's free for SJ County residents.

### 3. The Garage

Round up and drop off the following items at SJC Household Hazardous Waste: aerosols, batteries, paints, stains, solvents, thinners, pesticides, herbicides, and other garden chemicals and cleaning supplies (from the garage or under the kitchen sink).

Try to reduce your garden tools—especially if you now hire a landscaping service. Finally, sweep out the garage. It doesn't have to be perfect—just organized enough to comfortably fit the number of cars it was built for.

**Start this weekend—you'll be amazed at how good a decluttered space feels!**

