

## #209 - How to Keep Your Surfaces Clear

Hi there! You're listening to the Lazy Genius Podcast. I'm Kendra Adachi, and I'm here to help you be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. Today is episode 209 - how to keep your surfaces clear. Clutter is a real thing, it feels like there's never a clear spot to put anything down, and I think it's safe to say that when surfaces are reasonably clear, your home feels cleaner and more welcoming even if it's dirty. So today, I am going to share the ten commandments or ten rules or ten principles - let's go with principles - of keeping your surfaces clear.

Number one. You don't have to have clear surfaces. You don't have to. This is not a rule. Sometimes our season of life makes it really hard to keep them clear. Newborn life comes to mind. There are so many tiny moving parts to keeping a tiny baby alive, and expecting your counter to be clear of bottles is impossible. It is an impossibility. That is just not the season of life for clear kitchen counters. Also sometimes we have busy days or we're tired or we're outside reading a book or playing with the kids or we stayed at the library or the park longer, any number of things that keep us from clearing off our surfaces when we might normally do it. So this isn't a rule. It's okay if you have cluttered surfaces. It's okay if they don't bother you. They might not bother you! It's totally fine. It's totally fine. So start there please. You don't have to have clear surfaces. This is not a mandate. There is no morality here. You do what matters to you in the season of life that you are in.

Number two. Not everything has to be clear all the time. This one feels very important, especially when your entire house feels like it's going to eat you. There's so much stuff everywhere that you start to get what I call Big Black Trashbag Energy and just start throwing stuff away. Or you have an expectation that every surface has to be clear always in order for your house to function. And I just want to remind you that most days that's probably not how you feel. You don't have everything to be clear all the time. You might just need some things to be clear some of the time. So drop the all or nothing. It will not serve you well.

So number one, you don't have to have clear surfaces. Number two, not everything has to be clear all the time. And number three, some stuff needs to stay out. Like those bottles I just mentioned. Or your TV remote. Or the phone charger or the stack of books that your kid is reading. Some stuff needs to stay out. A zero sum approach to clearing your surfaces won't work. Some stuff has to be out. Speaking that into your situation really helps you not seek out solutions for things that don't actually need a solution.

Number four, claim intentional space. There might be in every room a surface or two or three that you really want to keep clear. In my kitchen, it's our kitchen island. And I recognize that not everybody has a kitchen island, so just name whatever you need to name for whatever room you have. But our kitchen island serves me and the function and soul of the kitchen best when it's either in excellent use making snacks and meals or completely cleared off. I've mentioned before in the episode about cleaning your kitchen that it's so fantastic to have a dirty dishes zone which is simply the place you always put dirty dishes. You don't have to wash them yet or

load them in the dishwasher, but you have claimed a space for those dirty dishes. That's where they always go. That claimed space is intentional and doesn't seep into other spaces. Like my kitchen island. Even when the counter where we put our dirty dishes is covered in dishes, the clear island still feels like the kitchen is working for me and not me for it. It's doing what I need it to do. This can happen in every single room. Claim intentional space for clear surfaces and then for other surfaces that won't always be clear but serve a specific purpose. So claim intentional space.

Number five, mark the borders. This one is kind of magical. When your stuff is on a surface on its own just hanging out, it looks like clutter. If you put that same stuff in a basket or on a tray, it's a different ballgame. Now it looks purposeful. Mark your borders. Mark borders with trays and baskets and shelves and jars whatever else. Mark your borders. Give your stuff an intentional place to go on an intentional surface where that stuff does serve your needs. If it's something that has to stay out, mark its borders. Our favorite home guru The Nester has something similar to this that she called a home base. It's basically a bordered container in every room that holds that regular daily things. So for example, my living room. We have four tables in our living room. They're all pretty small, but we have sectional sofa as well as three individual chairs, and I learned from The Nester that surfaces really do matter in rooms where people are sitting because of things like drinks and plates and books you're reading. It's so important to try and have a surface that's within reach of any seat in your room. So we have four tables - a main coffee table in front of the couch, one table next to my morning chair, one table in between the other two chairs, and a table that's really a storage with a lid and a tray on top that's on the far side of the couch. Now the main coffee table is always clear unless it's actively being used. But when we do our family tidy, when tidy the L as we say in our house which is our main living area that's kind of in the shape of an L, that table is always completely cleared off. Nothing lives there permanently. But what about the things that we use every day like TV remotes and a tissue box and the comb and ponytail holders I use every night to braid Annie's hair while she watches a video? What do we do with those things? They are on a tray on that storage basket. That's where they go. That's the living room homebase. That's where the borders are marked. Mark your borders. We all have stuff that has to be out, so make it feel less out by putting it in or on something and marking the borders.

Number six, if you can't clear, stack. Some of you might be like me and visual clutter becomes mental clutter, so clearing away clutter is really important to function as a human. Or sometimes you only have sixty seconds to clear a room and that sixty seconds isn't enough to clear everything. So when you can't clear, stack. If the kitchen table is covered in books and art supplies and the mail and whatever else and you just don't have the time or energy to put things away but the cluttered table is making you crazy, stack it all up. Make a neat pile. It's almost like creating borders but with the edges of a stack. I know it's simple, but it helps. When you can't clear, stack.

**AD BREAK**

So quick recap, number one, you don't have to have clear surfaces; two, not everything has to be clear all the time; three, some stuff needs to stay out; four, claim intentional space; five, mark the borders; six, if you can't clear, stack; and now seven, have a Wild West surface. I love naming things the Wild West because it's like whatever man. We don't know what's happening. But sometimes you need a surface where there are no rules, there are no expectations, it's a dumping ground, and it's okay if it stays that way for awhile. In fact, a Wild West surface sometimes makes it easier because you're not expecting everything to be clear all the time, and it's a place you can move those stacks when you have the time. Then you batch clear and put all of that stuff that's been waiting on the Wild West surface, you put it away all at once. But having somewhere where the rules are loose is so important. Otherwise, you're going to expect something from yourself and from your home that isn't sustainable. You likely can't have every surface clear all the time or will have the energy to even do that, so have a surface that you choose that's a little out of the way maybe but it's where stuff can go if you don't have time to put it away.

Number eight, make clearing part of your rhythm. This is for daily regular clearing, and this is also though for situational clearing. Okay, so let's do daily clearing. We tidy every day before screen time. The kids know that we don't start screen time until we do a tidy. I don't want to spend their screen time cleaning up their mess. I don't want to do it. That does not feel fair, so we do it together. That's part of our rhythm. By the way, you guys, next week is an episode on screen time. Um okay so clearing our L surfaces, our main living surfaces is already part of our daily rhythm. And it makes a huge difference. So see where you can add that to your own daily rhythm. And notice it's not every surface in the whole house. It's just in our living room and kitchen. It's just the main part of the house where we mostly hang out. Don't expect this to happen every day in every room. Most likely. Now situational clearing. There are some great house rules that you can set to keep certain surfaces from becoming overwhelming. I think overwhelming surfaces happen when more than one task is happening in one place. It's the overlap of living, of projects and chores and whatever. For example, I have a house rule that I have shared on Instagram before, but in case you haven't heard me say this before, I always clean off the kitchen counters, really the island, before I go grocery shopping. It is so helpful to come home with bags of food and stuff and not have to add it to a pile of mail, a stuffed animal with a broken seam that I need to sew together, my computer, a stack of books, you get the idea. I did that, I made that house rule because I was getting overwhelmed by everything on my kitchen surfaces when I went shopping. It's like I couldn't put away the groceries or the stuff that was already there because it all became this overwhelming hub of trash and I was like "I can't don't make me this is too hard" and I would stall out. So I created a house rule to keep that from happening. I clean the kitchen counters off before I go to the store. Simple and works like a dream. So where can you create a house rule for situational clutter? And then that becomes part of your rhythm whenever that situation shows up.

Number nine, put everything in its place. This is a Lazy Genius principle, just like house rules are, and a lot of what keeps our surfaces dirty is that stuff doesn't have a place. And I want to encourage you that that doesn't mean that you're doing this wrong. Sometimes things don't have an obvious place. For example, from where I'm sitting in my bedroom because I do all my

work and recording at a desk at the foot of my bed, I can see my dresser. Right now on my dresser is an Amazon box with a new phone photography setup to make easier for me to do videos, but I don't have a place for that gear yet, so it's just on my dresser. There are three swimsuits tops that are too small for me this summer, and I don't know what I'm doing with them yet, so they're just in a stack on my dresser. And there's a guitar strap that didn't get put away in the guitar case, and if you have guitars, you know it's only like 15 seconds but it's kind of a big 15 seconds to pull out the guitar case, open all the snaps, lift up the guitar, wrap up the strap to put in the little cubby hole in the case, snap it back closed... it's not a hard thing. It's not time consuming. But it takes more steps than the usual oh let's put this thing away, so it's still on the dresser. Now the guitar strap has a place. Nobody has put it there yet though. But the other things don't. They don't have a place yet. Sometimes things don't have a place yet, so be kind to yourself and name that the reason your surface isn't clear is maybe because you haven't named where something goes yet. That's your next step. Where is this gonna go? But it's easier to clear surfaces when everything has a place.

And finally number ten, put everything in its place as soon as you're able. Now this isn't a rule. This isn't me telling you what to do. You do what you want. This is just acknowledging what we all know and how we all live pretty much every day that if we don't something away kind of soon after we're doing using it, it will sit for a long time. The longer it sits, the longer it will sit. It's so weird. So a way to begin clearing your surfaces is to clear them as soon as you're able. Or put things in their places before you put them down on a random surface that isn't their place. The sooner you do it, the less you'll have to. Which again it's fine if you don't. You're not a bad person or a bad housekeeper or any of that. Seasons of life, you guys. But that is an approach and a perspective that can help if clearing your surfaces often matters to you.

And those are the ten principles of how to keep your surfaces clear. I hope that helps! I put up a poll last week sharing the next few episodes and what you guys were most excited about and it was this by a lot. So I hope it's met you helped you, and I'm so glad you listened.

Okay, before we go, let's celebrate our lazy genius of the week! It's Sasha who doesn't have a last name on Instagram which I respect. Sasha Says. I found Sasha because she tagged me in a post for The Popcast with Knox and Jamie. So they celebrated their 400th episode last week, and they had a fun Instagram graphic to fill out that asked people what their popcast catch phrase is and what the popcast got them into. And Sasha said her favorite catch phrase "How dare you" which I have Jamie say to me personally and it's kind of the best to make her fake mad enough to say "how dare you" but Sasha also said that the thing the popcast got her into was the lazy genius! So that's so fun! I'm so glad you're here, Sasha! Plus Sasha's bio says she loves nail polish, reading romance novels, wearing bright lipstick, and she is forever geographically impaired, and if you sub for the word romance books about circuses or teenage girls bringing down the patriarchy, Sasha and I are the same. So thank you for listening, Sasha, and for being here, and the same to all of you. I'm so grateful for every ear, for every podcast review, book review, Instagram follower, newsletter subscriber, you guys are just the best. So until next time, be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. I'm Kendra, and I'll see you next week!