

How to downsize your book collection

By *admin*

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I am in the process of downsizing all of my possessions.

The challenge is that I do not want to get rid of stuff. I look at the thing that I know I should get rid of, and I imagine how it might come in useful in the future, and then I end up keeping everything except a few obvious discardables.

Solution

Then I discovered the solution: Instead of choosing what to discard, choose what to **keep!** For me, this change in perspective made a huge difference.

Applied to my book collection

Here's how it worked with my book collection:

- I own about 600 books.
- I decided I want to keep only the best 100 books that I own.
- So I went shopping in my own collection for the books I considered the most important.

I had a few other rules:

1. I get rid of any book that I can find that information online (e.g. dictionaries, math formula books, most cook books)
2. I also get rid of any book that I can find in the library if I want to read again, but it is not urgent for my work (e.g. literature, poetry, business reference)
3. Finally, I get rid of any book I will not use in the next few years, as I will be able to buy the book again (or borrow it from the library) on my iPad in the future.

So the result is that I ended up with 120 books I am currently keeping, with an eye on some that may be discarded later. That's about two shelves worth of books.

My 500 or so remaining books will either be sold on Amazon, or donated to the library after friends have picked through them.

To declutter the rest of the house

Now I can apply this process to the rest of the house. Instead of deciding to get rid of something, decide what I will keep.

Further reading

I really enjoy the decluttering articles on the blog zenhabits.net [1] written by Leo Babauta. Thanks Leo.

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