

How to keep tidy

by Guy Browning



Everything in life has its proper place. If it's not in that place it is officially untidy. If the thing doesn't have a proper place in the first place then it is officially rubbish.

REMEMBER THAT ONE person's tidiness is another person's chaos. Often these two people live together. There are three levels of untidiness: the first is towels on floor; the second is towels stuffed on towel rail; the final level is towel hung neatly over the rail with no discernible wrinkles.

The acid test of whether you are naturally untidy is if you answer yes to the following questions: Does your

car currently have any food or drink packaging on the floor? Do you feel that straightening a duvet once you're up is completely unnecessary? Are your CDs divorced from their cases for years at a time?

Few roles are reserved for modern man, but taking out the rubbish is one. It's like hunter-gathering in reverse. Bins are vital for tidy people, but are a constant source of irritation because they're full of rubbish. Some

super-tidy people eventually decide that even the bin is cluttering up the place and it gets thrown out in a kind of existential implosion.

A wastepaper basket is too large if it takes more than a month to fill. Anything over a month and there's a real danger of it becoming compost. A correctly sized bin should be able to fit comfortably over your head, but not when you're wearing a cycling helmet.

Some people's houses are so neat and tidy that there at first appears to be no sign of life. It's often very difficult to go to the toilet in these houses, partly because your bowels are too afraid to move but more importantly because there will inevitably be a freak accident where you end up peeing up the walls and all over the curtains.

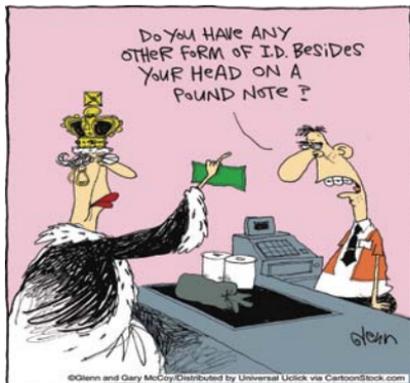
The secret to tidiness is storage space. Some people put things away in cupboards, but other people view entire rooms as large cupboards: as long as things are in a room and the door is closed, everything in it is tidy.

Young children are also obsessed with tidying – but in a negative way, in that they spend a lot of time untidying. It's their way of showing they can change the universe around them. Tidying in later life is an attempt to put the universe back where it was.

In general, it's worth remembering that life is a messy, chaotic business. But underneath there is a clearly discernible pattern. It just takes a lifetime of tidying before you can see it. ❁

© GUY BROWNING IS AUTHOR OF 'NEVER PUSH WHEN IT SAYS PULL' AND CREATOR OF 'TORTOISE IN LOVE' (DVD) – USED BY PERMISSION.

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I DIDN'T LIKE MY BEARD AT FIRST. THEN IT GREW ON ME.