

Collectible or Clutter? Is it Trash or Treasure?

Albuquerque, NM. What's the difference between collectibles – comic books, figurines, coins, whatever – and clutter? Are those stacks of old magazines valuable or just blocking the hallway? What about that shelf of glass animals from your grandmother? Is it a dust magnet or a collection of antique objects? Professional organizers deal with this question everyday and have some advice on distinguishing between the two.

“Not everything the media says is a collectible will be worth something someday. True collectibles have monetary or sentimental value, are rare, or they are useful to you in some way,” says Leigh Ann Hensel, one of the New Mexico members of the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO). Hensel's Albuquerque-based Buying Time Professional Organizing Systems specializes in residential organization, including managing collections of memorabilia and photographs. “Collectibles also should also be organized and maintained, even if that means they are in a marked box in storage.”

Heather Wood of Santa Fe's Casa Milagros Interiors (House Miracles) says clutter interferes with your life in a way that collections do not. “When the stuff of your life is preventing you from living, it's clutter. If accumulating things like figurines has become a habit and not a conscious choice on your part, or you keep things out of a sense of obligation to the person who gave it to you, it's just clutter. Get rid of it!” Wood, also a NAPO member, concentrates on organizing residences, interior redesign and real estate staging.

Both women have some tips for organizing and maintaining your collectibles so that they don't become clutter.

- Group like objects on a shelf, or in a cabinet or case, preferably enclosed to reduce dust.
- Make your collection a special focal point and conversation starter.
- Work your collection into your décor as a useful accent. Antique milk pitchers make wonderful vases or pencil holders, for example.

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