

Using the Room Function Chart

A great exercise that was very helpful for my own family comes from Peter Walsh's book, *It's All Too Much: An Easy Plan for Living a Richer Life With Less Stuff*. Walsh suggests a methodical way to bring the household together and open up dialogue about decluttering your home. He introduces the **Room Function Chart** as a tool to get everyone thinking about your goals for each room.

Last summer, I tried this exercise on my family. I explained it would "help us grow together and help us work towards a more peaceful home." Cautious but compliant, everyone submitted to my very simple instructions. I handed them each their own copy of the **Room Function Chart** and asked them to visit each room in our home and complete the questions on the chart. We would gather back in 30 minutes.

Visiting each room, we would consider things like:

- How is this room actually being used?
- What is the ideal function of the room?
- Who uses this room?
- Who should use it?
- What should it contain?
- What has to go?

When we came back together, we reviewed one room at a time, giving each family member a chance to review their answers. (We did not review bedrooms since they are not common areas for the family.)

What did we learn?

- We had fairly similar goals for each space in our home. If one member gave input new to the rest of us, it was very enlightening and led to some good discussion and compromise.
- There were indeed items which needed to be relocated, and now we could develop a plan together to best serve our family. We could work together to figure out where these items could go, who would take responsibility, and what sort of time frame was needed.
- I was using our kitchen gathering space as a make-shift office! Wow! I really had become blind to the fact that I regularly set up the kitchen table with my computer and files. While I had good reasons for this, I failed to see the impact I was having on everyone else. I gladly figured out an alternate plan to respect my family's vision for that important common space.

Even if this exact exercise isn't ideal for your own family, I strongly recommend the **Room Function Chart** as a useful tool for your own personal planning. It will give you clarity as you evaluate the spaces in your home. You can address your main purpose for each room and figure out what belongs--and what doesn't. This resource can help you take a concrete step for simplifying your home for you and your family.

Room Function Chart

By Peter Walsh

LIVING ROOM	
Current function	
Ideal function	
Who uses it?	
Who should use it?	
What should it contain?	
What has to go?	

DINING ROOM	
Current function	
Ideal function	
Who uses it?	
Who should use it?	
What should it contain?	
What has to go?	

KITCHEN	
Current function	
Ideal function	
Who uses it?	
Who should use it?	
What should it contain?	
What has to go?	

Room Function Chart

By Peter Walsh

FAMILY ROOM	
Current function	
Ideal function	
Who uses it?	
Who should use it?	
What should it contain?	
What has to go?	

YOUR BEDROOM	
Current function	
Ideal function	
Who uses it?	
Who should use it?	
What should it contain?	
What has to go?	

OTHER	
Current function	
Ideal function	
Who uses it?	
Who should use it?	
What should it contain?	
What has to go?	

Room Function Chart (sample)

By Peter Walsh

LIVING ROOM	
Current function	<i>paying bills and storage for Dad's sports memorabilia</i>
Ideal function	<i>formal entertaining</i>
Who uses it?	<i>Dad</i>
Who should use it?	<i>Mom and Dad, kids on special occasions</i>
What should it contain?	<i>couch, chairs, and table free of piles, clean floor space</i>
What has to go?	<i>sports memorabilia; and we need room in the offic so Dad can pay bills there</i>

DINING ROOM	
Current function	<i>Mostly a place where the kids play and keep their toys</i>
Ideal function	<i>a place for the family to gather and eat together; also nice to have occassional dinner parties</i>
Who uses it?	<i>the kids</i>
Who should use it?	<i>whole family</i>
What should it contain?	<i>dining table and chairs, clutter-free with room to walk around the table</i>
What has to go?	<i>the toys--but where?</i>

KITCHEN	
Current function	<i>where we cook and eat</i>
Ideal function	<i>same as above</i>
Who uses it?	<i>whole family</i>
Who should use it?	<i>whole family</i>
What should it contain?	<i>food, dishes, cooking supplies</i>
What has to go?	<i>too many cooking supplies that we don't use--too hard to cook and keep clean</i>