



Keep or Toss: 4 Questions to Help You Declutter Your Living Space

By: Susan Kleinman

Before you shop for your living room remodel, determine what stays and what's headed to the curb.

Does It Work in the Space?

"I love considering existing pieces as a source in my shopping," says interior designer Andrew Suvalsky. "But I look at what someone has with the same critical eye as when looking for new items." He suggests looking at a piece, whether already owned or not, through the following criteria: First, is it the right shape and size, and second, is the right style?

"You have to be fairly tough and non-emotional in saying goodbye to pieces that really won't work in your design," Suvalsky says, "but if you feel you must use a piece for sentimental reasons, then at least be sure to consider it upfront so that your other selections make that piece feel more relevant rather than left over."

Is It Valuable?

If you can't stand that \$20,000 Biedermeier chest, you shouldn't have to live with it, and you can have a reputable antiques dealer resell it for you. But if something is valuable and you like it well enough, think twice about swapping it out just for the sake of having something new. "A practical way to decide whether to keep something based on value is to research it to the best of your ability — see what it would sell for on eBay or Craigslist," says interior designer Lucie Ayres of 22 Interiors. "If the value of the object or furniture is low, then get rid of it and upgrade."

Do You Love It?

That chair you fell in love with at a chic furniture store. The rug you shipped back from your Moroccan vacation. The throw pillow that always makes you smile. If there's something in your living room that you absolutely adore, hold on to it. Incorporating things that are meaningful to you is what will make your new living room feel like home.

Can You Tweak It?

If you love the shape of your almost-new sofa but hate the color, consider having it reupholstered. If the milk-paint finish on your rustic coffee table won't work with your more sophisticated design plans, maybe you can have it sanded and refinished in a glossy cherry or mahogany. "Older tables, chests or any case good can be brought back to life with new lamps, mirrors or a coat of paint," says interior designer Karen Soojian, ASID. "And upholstered pieces can easily be updated with a new fabric."

Ultimately, these changes are worthwhile only if you love the shape of the piece, or if it's in otherwise-excellent condition. If you were never that crazy about that coffee table, or if the springs on the couch are shot, it may be better (easier, snazzier and more economical) to shop for something new.