

Keep, Decide, Let Go

A family sorting guide for Albuquerque estate cleanouts. There's a third bucket most guides skip — DECIDE LATER. Use it freely.

The trap most families fall into: trying to make every keep-or-toss decision in one weekend, while exhausted, before grief has settled. Don't. Sort into THREE piles, not two. The middle pile — DECIDE LATER — is your release valve. Anything you can't decide today goes there. Box it, label it, store it. Decide in three months when your head is clearer. Most regret in estate cleanouts comes from things tossed too fast, not things kept too long.

KEEP

irreplaceable, sentimental, or legally required

VITAL RECORDS

- Birth, death, marriage certificates
- Social Security cards
- Military discharge papers (DD-214)
- Naturalization / immigration papers
- Adoption records

LEGAL & FINANCIAL

- Wills, trusts, power of attorney
- Deeds, titles, mortgage payoffs
- Recent tax returns (last 7 years)
- Stock certificates, bonds, CDs
- Insurance policies still in force

TRULY IRREPLACEABLE

- Family photographs (all of them)
- Handwritten letters, journals, diaries
- Family Bibles & inscribed books
- Recipe cards in their handwriting
- Original artwork by family

HEIRLOOM RESCUE ITEMS

- Items kids/grandkids may want later
- Wedding rings, watches, dog tags
- Quilts, christening gowns
- Handmade ornaments

DECIDE LATER

valuable but unsure — box and revisit in 3 months

FURNITURE & DECOR

- Pieces siblings haven't seen yet
- Anything that may have value
- Items kids might want in their next home

BOOKS & MEDIA

- Cookbooks with margin notes
- Yearbooks (theirs and yours)
- Photo albums you haven't gone through
- VHS / 8mm home movies (digitize first)

SPECIALIZED ITEMS

- Tools, fishing gear, sports equipment
- Costume & fine jewelry — together
- Coin or stamp collections
- Specialty hobby equipment (sewing, woodworking)

THE DOUBT PILE

- Anything you can't decide on in 30 seconds
- Items with story attached but no plan
- Things one sibling wants and another doesn't

HOW TO HANDLE

- Box. Label clearly. Store at one address.
- Set a calendar reminder for 90 days.
- Revisit when the dust settles.

CAN GO

we (or others) will rehome, recycle, or remove

BOOKS & PAPER (WE TAKE)

- Books, magazines, catalogs — any condition
- DVDs, CDs, audiobooks
- Vinyl records, sheet music
- Old maps, brochures

E-WASTE (WE TAKE)

- Computers, monitors, printers
- TVs, stereos, speakers
- Phones, tablets, cables, cords
- Small appliances

FURNITURE & HOUSEHOLD

- Used furniture (donate or estate sale)
- Kitchenware, dishes, glassware
- Linens, towels, bedding
- Holiday decorations

WORN-OUT CLOTHING

- Donate good condition; recycle the rest
- Bridges of Care, Goodwill, Salvation Army

ROUTINE BILLS & JUNK MAIL

- Years of utility bills, junk catalogs
- Expired warranty paperwork
- Medical EOBs (keep last 5 years)
- Credit card statements (last 7 years)

When you're ready to clear what's in the CAN GO pile — books, e-waste, the whole house — call or text [702-496-4214](tel:702-496-4214). Walkthroughs and quotes are free. Most cleanouts cost the family nothing because the resale + Heirloom Rescue side of the business covers the work.

When in doubt — a quick reference

The five questions that come up every estate cleanout

"Is this paper actually important?"

If it has a raised seal, a notary stamp, an account number, a Social Security number, or someone's signature on something legal — KEEP. If it's a duplicate of a duplicate, or an old utility bill from 2008, can go. When in doubt about a single piece of paper, that's what the DECIDE LATER box is for. We sort family papers carefully — we don't shred anything until you've signed off on it.

"What about siblings who aren't here?"

Put nothing on the curb until everyone has had the photo walkthrough. Take a phone video of every room before you sort. Send it to all siblings. Anything anyone wants pulled, gets pulled. Decisions made by the people in the room create resentment that lasts decades — better to wait two weeks for a video review than rush a decision someone disagrees with in three months.

"This furniture might be worth something — or not."

If you suspect something is genuinely valuable (signed art, antique with provenance, anything you've seen on Antiques Roadshow), set it aside. We're not a certified appraiser. If we see something that looks like it deserves a real appraisal, we'll tell you and pause. For ordinary midcentury furniture, used appliances, and decor — most of it goes to estate sale, donation, or recycle. Real appraisable value is rare.

"What about the books?"

Books are our specialty. Don't toss any of them. We take the whole library — any condition. We sort them: collectible first editions get listed for sale (proceeds fund the cleanout), good used books go to little libraries and partner sites, the rest gets recycled responsibly. If there's a chance Grandma's annotated cookbook collection is worth something, we'll know.

"What if I throw out something I wish I'd kept?"

This is the most common regret. The cure: don't make irreversible decisions while you're exhausted. Use the DECIDE LATER box. Schedule the cleanout for 4–6 weeks AFTER the death, not 4 days after. The house can wait. You can't undo a thrown-away letter.

The 30-minute family triage (do this first)

- **Walk every room with your phone.** Video. Don't narrate, don't decide. Just record.
- **Send the videos to every sibling.** Ask: "Is there anything in any of these rooms you want?" Give them a week.
- **Pull everything siblings call out.** Box and label with the sibling's name.
- **Locate the four document piles:** KEEP (vital), KEEP (financial), DECIDE LATER, junk-shred.
- **Set the cleanout date 4–6 weeks out, not 4 days out.** Write it on the calendar. Stop opening boxes until then.