

STAGING TO STAY

Who says it's only for selling.

BEFORE



Rather than just housekeeping, the idea behind reducing clutter is to highlight what's important. "When you have more than you need, nothing is special."

ONE ROOM AT A TIME

"The biggest source of frustration homeowners have is not seeing progress. If you tackle one room at a time, you cannot help but see the space as it is transformed."

EDIT FURNITURE

"People often buy a lot of furniture for the two times each year they entertain large groups. We really need to decorate to meet our everyday needs and have a Plan B for special occasions."

TRY AND TRY AGAIN

"Keep experimenting. People get this idea that if it's not right the first time, then that's as good as it's going to get. But we might stage a room six different ways before we say it's all set."

AFTER



The most dramatic changes to this South Boston room were new paint and carpet. "Neutral colors give you a lot of flexibility, then you have freedom with what you do in the rest of the room."

"This family didn't move furniture or art and the room still has a totally new feel."

CONQUER MAIL MOUNTAIN

SORT IT

Keep a recycling bin or shredder as close as possible to where the mail arrives, says Brookline's **HEIDI SOLOMON**, owner of P.O.S.H./Professional Organizing Services by Heidi (posh-boston.com, 857-204-6240). Immediately dispatch the 50 percent or so that's junk.

OPEN IT

"It's really easy to ignore an unopened piece of mail," Solomon says, so open all your keepers, but toss any filler, like marketing materials and return envelopes if you pay online.

JOIN IT

Get on do-not-mail lists at websites run by Direct Marketing Association (dmachoice.org) and the consumer credit reporting industry (optoutprescreen.com). The latter is particularly important, Solomon says, because it's focused on things like credit card offers — "that's where people steal identities."