

Cluttercore: the pandemic trend for celebrating stuff, mess and comfort

Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

1 Warmer

Is there a room, cupboard or other place in your house that is full of things you do not often use? If so, what is in there?

2 Key words

Match the key words with the definitions. Then find them in the article to read them in context. The paragraph numbers will help you.

by-product

clutter

piled up with

rediscover

stuff

value

1. a variety of objects or things _____ (para 1)
2. the mess you get when there are too many things in a place _____ (para 2)
3. something that has not been planned but happens as a result of another situation _____ (para 2)
4. realize again that you like something _____ (para 2)
5. the amount that something is worth _____ (para 2)
6. with lots of things on top of it _____ (para 3)

comfort

cosy

entertain

memento

repurpose

rubbish

7. something that you keep to remind yourself of a particular person, place or experience _____ (para 3)
8. warm and comfortable, and making you feel relaxed _____ (para 5)
9. use things in a different way from how you did before _____ (para 6)
10. invite someone to your house and give them food and drink and a nice time _____ (para 7)
11. things that you throw away because they are no longer useful _____ (para 8)
12. something that makes you feel better when you are sad or worried _____ (para 9)

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- 1 In the past few months, the street outside my flat has become full of stuff: baby baths, books, chairs. People leave them, others take them; nobody pays anybody any money.
- 2 Clutter has become a by-product of the pandemic. Yet we are not sure what to do with it. "Because they are at home, some people have been decluttering, but others are rediscovering their stuff," says Jennifer Howard, author of *Clutter: An Untidy History*. "The pandemic has made us look at what we have, make better use of objects and space, and also see their value, often for the first time."
- 3 Howard, who works from home, has noticed people using encyclopaedias as laptop stands. On social media, this new love of forgotten things is called cluttercore. On TikTok, videos hashtagged #cluttercore have almost two million views. On Instagram, there are about 1,300 posts. Many of these show beds piled up with clothes, walls covered with paintings and pictures, and shelves full of mementoes.
- 4 Cluttercore fan Amy-Louise Holton, 36, who makes and sells clothes on Etsy, describes her clutter of fabrics and threads as "part of the creative process". Irina Balog, a 32-year-old interior designer agrees. She says, "The way I decorate my space is part of who I am."
- 5 "I've accepted that I won't own a house, so making my rented flat joyful and cosy is really important," says Holton.
- 6 Clutter is not just mess made by buying things we don't really need. Some people are repurposing their things for pandemic life: for example, my ceramic pot now holds pens instead of plants.
- 7 Joseph Ferrari, a clutter expert at DePaul University in Chicago, says, "Home is not simply a place. It is an extension of us." It is now also an office, a classroom and other things. It is something to be looked at, as well as lived in. We may not be entertaining friends, but we are inviting colleagues in via Zoom.
- 8 Of course, one person's clutter is another person's rubbish, and how we look at it depends on how we define it. "To me, clutter is stuff that is no longer useful and gets in the way of living," says Howard. She wrote her book on clutter after tidying up her mother's house after she died and finding "bags of bags, pickle jars, jars of coins, jars of rubber bands. So much stuff!"
- 9 Cluttercore is somewhere in the middle of maximalism (having many things) and minimalism. There is a "comfort in things", as the anthropologist Daniel Miller once said.

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3 Comprehension check

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the information in the article? Correct any that are false.

1. Cluttercore is a hashtag used on two social-media sites with pictures of other people's stuff.
2. The author has been putting her old chairs and other stuff on the street outside her home.
3. Being at home more, people are noticing their old things again and learning to love them.
4. Instead of throwing things away, people are using their old things in different ways.
5. Now that we are spending more time at home because of the pandemic, it is important to entertain more.
6. Having a lot of clutter can make people feel cosy and relaxed in their homes.

4 Using the key words

Use some of the key words from task 2 to complete these sentences.

1. The dollar dropped in _____ last week.
2. I've started _____ a lot of the things in my garden.
3. Why is there so much _____ on my desk?
4. Her children have been a great _____ to her.
5. We _____ a lot and we get invited to friends' houses often, too.
6. The plate was _____ spaghetti.
7. Please put your _____ in the bin.
8. My grandmother lived in a very _____ little house.

5 Quotes

Do you agree with these quotes? Discuss them, using examples from your life or from the lives of people you know.

- "The pandemic has made us look at what we have, make better use of objects and space, and also see their value, often for the first time."
- "Home is not simply a place. It is an extension of us."
- "There is a comfort in things."

6 Discussion

- Do you have a lot of mementoes?
- Do you agree that clutter can make a home feel cosy?
- Have you repurposed any of your stuff recently?