



A SIR TIDY FREE RESOURCE

THE SHARED HOME GUIDE



Less blaming.
Clearer systems.
A home that works for everyone.

A practical guide to creating order when you don't live alone.

A SHARED HOME DOESN'T NEED IDENTICAL HABITS.

It needs systems different people can actually use.

01 START WITH THE SYSTEM

Your home is a shared system.

Living together means living differently. You may notice clutter immediately. Someone else may barely see it. You may want things put away after every use. Someone else may prefer one reset at the end of the day.

THE GOAL ISN'T TO AGREE ABOUT EVERYTHING.

It's to agree about enough.

TRY THIS FIRST

Before asking “Who is making the mess?”, try asking “What isn’t working here?”

That doesn't erase responsibility. It simply gives you somewhere practical to begin.

CHOOSE ONE PROBLEM SPOT

- ☐ Entryway
- ☐ Kitchen counter
- ☐ Bathroom
- ☐ Laundry
- ☐ Children's things
- ☐ Other

ONE SMALL RULE

Don't reorganize the whole household. Start with one shared space that causes repeated friction.

02 FAIR ISN'T ALWAYS 50/50

Fairness is more than a number.

One person may cook. Another may do laundry. One may have more time during the week; another may do more on weekends.

**A BETTER QUESTION**

Does this feel workable and fair to the people who live here?

WHAT RESEARCH ADDS

Research from the Netherlands shows that people judge fairness in household labour in relation to the wider picture - including paid work and childcare - rather than by looking at one chore in isolation.¹

A separate Dutch study of weekly task allocation found that households under time pressure can divide tasks differently from day to day while still arriving at a more balanced weekly total.²

REMEMBER THE INVISIBLE PART

Doing a task isn't always the whole task. Someone may also have to notice it, remember it, plan it and make sure it gets finished.

03 SHARE OWNERSHIP

Don't just share tasks.

“Just tell me what to do” can be genuinely helpful. But if one person still has to notice, remember and delegate every step, the system may still depend on them.

HELPING IS USEFUL.

Ownership is different.

TRY A COMPLETE LOOP

LAUNDRY

- ☐ Notice when it needs doing
- ☐ Wash
- ☐ Dry
- ☐ Fold
- ☐ Put away

ENTRYWAY

- ☐ Shoes return here
- ☐ Keys return here
- ☐ Bags return here
- ☐ Someone owns the reset when needed

A USEFUL CONVERSATION

Instead of negotiating every small action, agree on what done means for a task or shared zone.

04 WHEN CHILDREN SHARE THE SYSTEM

Teach the system before expecting the system.

Children aren't small adults. A system that feels obvious to you may be too complicated, too hidden or simply too difficult for their age.



MAKE THE NEXT ACTION EASIER

- ☐ Use fewer, clearer categories.
- ☐ Keep everyday homes visible and reachable.
- ☐ Use picture labels when words aren't useful yet.
- ☐ Make returning easier than leaving out.
- ☐ Match responsibility to age and ability.
- ☐ Show the system before expecting independence.

THE GOAL ISN'T A PERFECTLY TIDY CHILD.

It's a child who gradually learns how the home works.

KEEP EXPECTATIONS REALISTIC

Start simple. Model it. Repeat it. If the same step keeps failing, ask whether the system is asking too much.

05 BUILD ONE SHARED SYSTEM

Make one agreement everyone can understand.

Choose one problem spot. Then design for the people who actually use it - not for an imaginary perfectly organized household.

1. What happens here now?

2. What needs to happen here?

3. Who uses this space?

4. What's the simplest system everyone could realistically follow?

5. Who owns the reset when it is needed?

TEST IT FOR ONE WEEK.

Then make the system easier where it failed.

A system that keeps failing isn't automatically a discipline problem. Sometimes it's a design problem.

06 WHEN A PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZER ENTERS

The system has to survive real life.

If I organize a shared kitchen beautifully around the habits of one person, but three other people use it differently, I've probably created a beautiful problem.



WHEN I WORK IN A SHARED SPACE

- ☐ I observe who uses it - not only who contacted me.
- ☐ I ask what isn't working. Different people may have different answers.
- ☐ I look for common ground rather than one person's perfect system.
- ☐ I make the desired action easy to understand and repeat.
- ☐ We adjust what doesn't survive everyday life.

I'M NOT ORGANIZING A HOME FOR ONE PERSON.

I'm organizing a system for the people who live there.

WHAT ORGANIZATION CAN - AND CAN'T - DO

A system can't control people's behaviour. It can reduce friction, make expectations clearer and make the desired action easier.

07 BEFORE YOU TRY HARDER

Make the system more obvious.

If a shared space keeps returning to the same problem, don't immediately add more rules. Look for friction.

- ☐ Is the place for this item obvious?
- ☐ Can everyone reach it?
- ☐ Is putting it away harder than leaving it out?
- ☐ Does everyone know what 'done' means?
- ☐ Is one person carrying all the noticing and resetting?

LESS BLAMING.

Clearer systems.

FEELS DOABLE, BUT YOU'D RATHER NOT DO IT ALONE?

Sometimes knowing what to change is the easy part. If you'd like company, guidance and a fresh perspective, I'd be happy to help create a system that works for the home - and the people living in it.

FIND THE RIGHT SERVICE

The thinking behind this guide

RESEARCH & PRACTICAL CONTEXT

The studies below provide context for fairness, task allocation and household routines. The organizing recommendations are Sir Tidy's practical application of those ideas - not claims that research has proven one universal way to organize a shared home.

- ¹ Koster, T., Poortman, A.-R., van der Lippe, T., & Kleingeld, P. (2022). Fairness Perceptions of the Division of Household Labor: Housework and Childcare. *Journal of Family Issues*, 43(3), 679-702. doi:10.1177/0192513X21993899
- ² Ettema, D. F., & van der Lippe, T. (2009). Weekly rhythms in task and time allocation of households. *Transportation*, 36(2), 113-129. doi:10.1007/s11116-009-9190-3
- ³ Gillespie, B. J., Peterson, G., & Lever, J. (2019). Gendered perceptions of fairness in housework and shared expenses: Implications for relationship satisfaction and sex frequency. *PLOS ONE*, 14(3), e0214204. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0214204

A SIR TIDY PRINCIPLE

Research can give context. Your household still needs a system that fits the people who actually live there.