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Print this article back-to-back with The Kids' Paper Clutter Flow Chart for a fun, unique, inexpensive, educational handout.

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Is it *Kids' Paper* Clutter?

What is *Kids' Paper* clutter? Clutter is anything you don't *use, love, or need to keep*. In this case, clutter is all the schoolwork and artwork generated, and brought home, by your budding Picassos and Einsteins that just isn't that special, or that you simply have too much of. For each paper ask yourself: **Is it meaningful?** Does it represent a milestone in your child's life? Is it noteworthy in some other way? **Do I love it?** Consider this: If you love it so much, why is it crammed in a box (or under the bed) with a hundred other less meaningful papers? You love your child; you don't have to love everything they make or bring home. **Do I need to keep it?** Papers such as school and medical records should be stored in your household filing system. And useful, active papers such as class and sports schedules should be kept handy in a household reference binder. If you simply *want* to keep it, think about whether or not you can find it when you want to, and decide how *many* of the same type of papers to which you really want to devote storage space. **If the answer is yes – it's meaningful, you love it, or need to keep it -- wonderful, it stays! Just be sure to preserve it, display it, enjoy it, or store it in an organized manner.**

Why can't I part with my *Kids' Paper* clutter? Here are some common reasons:

It was a gift from my child. Great...but do you agree that not all such gifts are equally special?

I will feel guilty if I get rid of it. Why? What exactly are you doing wrong? Making more space in your home for more life? Teaching your kids how to maintain a clutter-free home of their own someday?

I'm saving it for my children. They might, indeed, want some of it when they grow up...but they certainly aren't going to want ALL of it! **It's so good/funny/cute!** OK, but how much of it do you have room for? How many others do you have like it? If it's so good/funny/cute, why not create a rotating art display and a proper way to store these items?

The bottom line: If it's *not meaningful, or you don't love it or need to keep it, it's clutter.*

What should I do with my *Kids' Paper* clutter? This one's easy: Toss, recycle, or give to grandparents, aunts, uncles, and kindly neighbors. (Think Art-of-the-Month Club.)

What if, despite my best intentions, I still have *Kids' Paper* clutter?

Designate a container to collect papers during the year (no need to purge daily), but don't let it overflow! When the school year ends, review all the papers. Keep only the best and most original art pieces, and the most noteworthy schoolwork. Ask your kids (if they are old enough) which are their favorites and why. If a month (or other self-imposed deadline) has gone by since you decided to try to purge your pile of kids' paper, and you haven't managed to do so, here are some suggestions: Take photos of your kids with their creations and let the items go (especially 3-D projects). Use the photos to make a memory book. If the item isn't special enough to give as a gift, or to include in a memory book, throw it in the trash or recycle it NOW!

Congrats, you are on the road to becoming *Kids' Paper* clutter-free!

If you need help, call a professional organizer or a friend to help you identify what you *use, love, and need to keep*, and help you store or display it in an organized manner.