LEARNING MADE EASY

Minimalism

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Experience more meaningful living with less

Declutter your space and clear your mind

Focus on what really matters

The Experts at Dummies

Minimalism

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Minimalism

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Contents at a Glance

Table of Contents

Introduction

Do you ever feel you'll scream if you have to make one more decision? What stakeholders to invite to the meeting, how much screentime to allow your pre-teen, who to call to get your dad a ride to the airport three towns over, how to request time off so you get it approved, which retirement investments to pick now so you don't run out of money later, what to fix for dinner, what to fix for lunch . . . Sometimes it seems like two minutes can't go by without needing to make a decision.

Layer in the difficulty of finding a specific item in that overstuffed closet or cluttered kitchen, always feeling a day late and a dollar short when paying the bills, and a late-night addiction to cute cat videos, and it's no wonder that our nervous systems always feel ready for fight or flight.

About This Book

We think practicing minimalism can help when life feels too full. Deciding what's important to you, focusing on just those priorities, and making all (OK, most) of your decisions in that context can help quiet the loud hum you've been struggling to get past. We think this approach can also apply to your money — figuring out your priorities, living within your means, and achieving your goals so you can live the life you want. Same for your digital life — getting rid of what you don't need, organizing what remains, and enjoying social media and streaming without going overboard.

If you worry that becoming a minimalist means giving away 99 percent of your possessions and adopting an all-white aesthetic, never fear. You can keep the cozy furniture and the dishware for eight if that fits with your definition of minimalism. The only rules are the ones you create.

This book is organized so you can find the information you need and then get on with your life; the table of contents and the index are your new best friends. But it's also a good read from front cover to back if that's your thing (or back to front, rebel!).

Foolish Assumptions

When writing this book, we made the following assumptions about you:

- You sometimes feel that life is filled with excess, and a simpler approach might be more rewarding.
- You wish your core values were more influential in the day-to-day decisions you make, or you want to explore what your core values are.
- You don't usually get to enjoy the experiences you love because there never seems to be enough money.
- You worry that a family member spends too much time watching videos and not enjoying the real-world hobbies they used to.
- You're comfortable using technology for at least some of your financial monitoring and decision-making.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book, icons in the margins highlight certain types of valuable information that call out for your attention. Here are the icons you'll encounter and a brief description of each.

REMEMBER

Remember icons mark the information that's especially important to know. To siphon off the most important information in each chapter, just skim through these icons.

TECHNICAL STUFF

The Technical Stuff icon marks nitty-gritty, in-depth information that you can normally skip over.

TIP

The Tip icon marks tips that you can use to make switching to a more minimalist lifestyle easier.

WARNING

The Warning icon tells you to watch out! It marks important information that may save you headaches on your minimalist journey.

Beyond the Book

In addition to the abundance of information and guidance related to minimalism that we provide in this book, you get access to even more help and information online at Dummies.com. Check out this book's online Cheat Sheet. Just go to www.dummies.com and search for "Minimalism For Dummies Cheat Sheet."

Where to Go from Here

You can start reading this book wherever you want — we wrote it so you don't have to read earlier chapters in order for later chapters to make sense (and we've included plenty of cross-references between chapters when you want more information).

Want to find out if you have an unhealthy relationship with your phone and what you can do about it? Start with Chapter 14. Feeling overwhelmed by the amount of stuff shoved into your closet? Check out Chapter 5. Wondering how to get out of debt so you can start saving for your dream vacation? Take a look at Chapter 12. Or get oriented to what this book covers by reading Chapter 1.

1
Getting into a Minimalist Mindset

IN THIS PART . . .

Figure out why too much stuff can be bad for you and how minimalism can help calm the chaos.

Discover how to succeed in adopting new habits, even if you've tried and failed to make lifestyle changes in the past.

Determine what "enough" means to you and understand how minimalism can help you achieve the goals and priorities you think are most important.

IN THIS CHAPTER

» Understanding what minimalism is and how it can help you

» Removing too much stuff and creating clutter-free, quieter spaces

» Bringing intention to your decisions

Chapter 1

Meeting Minimalism

The stereotypes of a minimalist abound. Owns one chair; it's uncomfortable. Rotates between seven identical black shirts. Reuses zip-top baggies from five years ago. Chooses a flip phone "for clarity." These are certainly "less" versus "more" choices. Are they the right choices for you? Maybe.

But your version could tilt more toward a family room with cozy seating for eight and still space for an impromptu dance party. Or a closet where hangers don't touch and enough options so you feel confident dressing for any occasion. Or a phone with the apps you need and photos you can find the first time you look for them.

Grab your one fork and let's dig in.

Getting the Lowdown on Minimalism

Most of us don't set out to live cluttered, distracted lives — it just gradually and quietly happens. Stuff accumulates because we keep more than we get rid of. Schedules fill up and we bob from one activity to another as life ever accelerates. Money decisions start to feel reactive as we try to keep up with day-to-day living while not completely losing sight of the future. And our phones and other technology compete for every spare moment of attention, at stop lights, before going to sleep, and any time we have more than ten seconds to wait.

Somewhere along the way, it gets harder to focus on what actually matters. That's where minimalism comes in — not as a trend or a set of strict rules, but as a way to mindfully live your life.

Mentioning minimalism's meaning

REMEMBER

Many people's definition of minimalism is pretty spare — few possessions, little color, lots of negative space, modern aesthetic. That's certainly the stereotype. And we agree with some of it. A minimalist life helps you feel calm and in control in a world that can feel overloaded and chaotic, and it can help you focus on what matters.

We don't think minimalism means owning little (although it likely means owning less), and we don't care what type of furniture you have or how seldom you check email.

For us, minimalism is about making choices on purpose — getting rid of distractions so you can focus on what really matters, and making more intentional choices about your stuff, your money, and your digital life so you can better appreciate this world and the people in it.

REMEMBER

Your definition of what's important and what's distraction won't necessarily be the same as your best friend's, and it may not match the thinking of the latest minimalist influencer. And that's okay. What's important is that you decide what makes sense for you. And your priorities and goals will change as your life changes, so as you navigate this book and determine what minimalism means to you, know that you may rejigger that definition more than once as you move through life's seasons.

Gaining more by having less

You might be drawn to minimalism because you want more calm, more clarity, and more space for the people, goals, and moments that make life feel meaningful again.

In the face of a lot of stuff, which most of us have too much of, a minimalist lifestyle can make everyday life feel more manageable and less distracting. By owning less (and making sure what you own feels meaningful), being more thoughtful about how you use your money, and setting boundaries around technology, it becomes easier to pay attention to what matters to you. Decisions take less effort because there are fewer to make, and there's less in the background competing for your attention. Take a look at Chapter 2 for a deeper dive into minimalism and its benefits and Chapter 3 to determine what "enough" means to you.

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About the Authors

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