

# Adam's Simple Guide

to:

# Minimalism

**By:** Adam Mayfield

([VagabondGuide.com](http://VagabondGuide.com))

To Amy G, may everything be as simple as hot air balloons and waterfalls

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## About the author

My name is Adam Mayfield. I was born in the mid 80's to a middle class family. Growing up we didn't have a whole lot of spare money. So when I was finally able to get a new bike or toy; I tended to hang on to it for a long time. After a while, I developed a sentimental view when it came to my possessions. My collection of stuff grew and grew. Once a year we'd have a yard sale and I'd reluctantly part with some of my old toys for cash. What did I do with that cash? Bought new toys!

I continued this process into my early 20's and before I knew it I had a 3 bedroom house and a two car garage full of junk. Stuff I didn't need but stuff I thought I couldn't live without. Everything I owned I bought myself and to throw it away seemed like such a waste of my hard earned money.

A few years back, the economy started to have issues and my job was eliminated. I was having trouble finding more work and I started to miss payments. First, it was the credit cards and then the motorcycle. Finally, it came down to the mortgage and that is when I decided I was in serious trouble.

I first parted with the motorcycle. I was able sell it for just enough to pay off my loan. That or it felt pretty good but I still had several thousand dollars in credit card debt. To help pay those or that debt down I started selling some of the higher end things that I wasn't really using. That felt even better.

As much stuff as I was unloading for pennies on the dollar, it wasn't enough. I wasn't able to pay the mortgage and I was forced into foreclosure. At the time, I would have said different but looking back, it was the best thing that could have happened to me.

Fast forward to now, two and a half years later, (remove and) I'm almost debt free (under \$1000), have very minimal possessions, and am saving money.

How exactly did I manage to do all of this and maintain a minimalist lifestyle?

- Hard work
- Time
- Determination
- And a few other tricks

I have come up with a few simple rules to get you started and help you maintain the minimalist lifestyle.

# Chapter 1

## What does it mean to be a minimalist?

I've seen minimalism defined many ways and in many different forms, some relating to music, art, photography, life, and so on. The few I was able to dig up on the internet are...

- A person advocating a minimal policy, style, technique, action, etc.
- Movements in various forms of art and design, especially visual art and music, where the work is stripped down to its most fundamental features.
- One who believes in or seeks a minimal state; one who seeks to minimize or reduce to a minimum.

My definition is a little different but along the same path. I believe minimalism is a way of life, a life that should be lived comfortably with the minimum amount of possessions.

Saying that one needs to live with only the essentials is ridiculous. The three things needed to survive are food, water, and shelter. Anything past that is just extra, right?

## What fun is that I ask?

Obviously we need to have some fun in our lives and we need some sort of entertainment and activity. That is what brings me to my first exercise.

1. I want you to take a piece of paper and write down your true passions in life. The list doesn't need to be long. It can be only one item. I know my list has only five or six items.
2. Next to those items, I want you to write down the minimum amount of equipment it takes to do that activities. Be reasonable. If you like to travel I don't want you to write down: Boeing 747. IE: If you love to draw then you need pencil and paper but not an art studio. If you love photography you would need a camera and film/computer.

I want you to think hard about what you have written down and what exactly it is you need to enjoy your passions. For me, I can enjoy my list of passions with only a very small list of items.

## Life is meant to be enjoyed and shared with others.

Over the course of this short ebook, I want you to keep a log of the items you use on a regular basis. This will help you later when you really start living the simple life.

# Chapter 2

## Making the preparations

This is where we start to get into the first real steps of your new lifestyle. We first need to prepare ourselves for what is about to happen. The road to a simpler life can be long and sometimes filled with hard decisions.

Finding the courage to sell/donate/throwaway something that has some sentimental value can be an extremely tough call.

Let me stop you right there. I want to let you know I'm not going to ask you to throw out old family photos or anything like that. This is only a simple guide.

### **The first step** (in this chapter)

Take a look around your house right now. Make note of what you have used today and write it down. After that, think about what you used yesterday and write that down. Do this as far back as you can remember in the past 30 days.

On the other side of the paper write down a list of items that you haven't used in who knows how long. Items that would be no worry to get rid of right now, at this very moment.

The minimalist lifestyle is as much a physical lifestyle as it is a mental one.

### **Learning to live with less can lead to much more.**

You have to be okay with the fact that these items on the other side of your paper will be gone.

# Chapter 3

## Trimming the excess and lightening the load

Now that the first few steps have been completed and (hopefully) you are mentally prepared to start chucking your junk, we can get started.

### **Step One** (the first real step)

Have a spare bedroom? Head there first and start small. Don't have a spare room? Head to the garage. At first things can be a little slow but will pick up speed quickly. Once you start to feel the liberation of throwing something in the trash you will crave more and the snowball effect is in full swing.

The first steps to deciding what to keep and what to get rid of are simple. All you have to do is ask yourself two questions.

1. Have I used this item in the past 6-12 months?
2. Does this item hold any other significant value? Such as sentimental.
3. If the answer is yes to either of those questions then set it aside and move onto the next item. Do this for your entire spare room or garage.
4. When I started, I was trying to get as much money for my things as I could. I was able to come up with four different groups for my things to go into.
  1. Ebay
  2. Craigslist
  3. Donation
  4. Throwaway

### **Ebay**

This group consisted of smaller items that carried a dollar value of \$10 or more. These items should be easily listed and shipped. I was able to sell countless DVDs, video games, computer parts, and so on. All of these items were small and worth a few bucks. That is the key to the Ebay category.

## **Craigslist**

The Craigslist group was composed of larger items that still carried a significant dollar value. Items like furniture, tires, spare computers, etc. Items I didn't feel comfortable donating but were too large to ship and sell via Ebay.

## **Donation**

This is probably the largest group. My donation group was made up of clothes, kitchen utensils, books, CDs, yard equipment, etc. The donation group was defined as items that were not really worth my time to sell individually but could be of use to someone else.

Note: If you wanted to take the time to put together a yard sale or even take on the task of a community (close neighbors) block sale, this can be a great way to unload your stuff onto unsuspecting victims while making a few extra bucks.

## **Throwaway**

This last group was probably the hardest group for me and probably many others. I defined this group as items that were of no cash value and not reusable by someone else. I threw away everything from paper notebooks, towels, and even my favorite pair of pants that had no life left in them.

I take a lot of notes and had kept a lot of notebooks around with everything from ideas to network diagrams. I had zero need for them but to throw something away that I had spent so much time on was a challenge. I also have no idea why I kept those pants around for so long. I had sewed and patched holes as much as possible.

Once you have completed one room, head to the next room, then the garage and so on; all the while keeping in mind these four categories.

## **Step Two**

This step is the simple one. Once you have your four groups, take the digital camera out of its case and start shooting. After that, start listing. Over the next few weeks or months you'll be clutter free and hopefully have a few extra bucks in your pockets.

## **A cluttered house leads to a cluttered mind**

In the mean time while you are waiting for you auctions to end, load up the car with your donation items and head to the local charity of your choice. Personally, I prefer Goodwill mainly due to their simplicity of donation. Pull up, a bell rings and an employee will come out to help you unload you goods into a wheeled bin. They even hand you a card for a tax credit for your donation.

Once you have made a few donation runs and some of your auctions have ended I would imagine you are feeling pretty good about your journey to a new and simpler life.

But this is where things start to get a bit more difficult. Especially depending on how much of a minimalist you choose to be.

# Chapter 4

## Deeper into the rabbit hole

Depending on your desired level of minimalism, this is where things can become a bit harder. This chapter will cover breaking ties with sentimental items and cutting back your possessions even more.

### Step Three

Cutting ties with the sentimental items leftover is a difficult task. It may take a bit more time but you need to ask yourself, is that piece of wedding cake that has been in the freezer really necessary? Is the Valentines bear that your significant other got you 4 years ago serving any purpose? The answer is no.

Should you throw out family photos or heirlooms? Of course not but you need to draw the line somewhere.

With enough time I'm certain that you will come to realize that attachments to these "just can't part with" items are not necessary.

That wedding dress hanging in the closet is not necessary. Why are you saving it? Hopefully you won't be getting divorced anytime soon and if you are single, are you really going to wear the same dress twice? Doubtful.

### Regrets

Have none! It's that simple. Once you make the drop off at Goodwill, don't look back. For starters I highly doubt they are going to give your stuff back to you the next day and secondly it's okay. I promise.

Go with your gut. Once you donate or throw something away, leave it there. Don't second guess yourself. Once you do, you'll be tripping over and moving that item around with you for the next 10 years.

### Step Four

Once you have gone through your entire house and have gotten rid of as much as you can using the previous 2 rules and for some, the first rule only, it's time to do it again. Start all over in that spare bedroom or garage but this time you will be asking yourself one question.

**Have I used this item in the past 3 months?**

If the answer is yes, then keep it. If not, you know what to do!

That's it!

Hopefully by this point, you know what you want is what you use on a regular basis. Remember back in the beginning I told you to keep a journal of the stuff you use regularly? Feel free to refer to that for some extra help.

If you are still having some trouble getting rid of things, rent a storage unit or recruit a friend and box up what is left and store it. See how long you can go without having to access those boxes. This technique worked great for me.

I quickly figured out what I needed and what I didn't.

As of writing this, I'm down to about half of what I stored a number of months ago. I have gotten rid of more than I ever thought possible.

Be sure to check/review my progress at [VagabondGuide.com/Blog](http://VagabondGuide.com/Blog).

There you have it, the four basic steps on how to become a minimalist. Let it be known that there are many ways to do things and this is just the path I chose to take in order to get where I am today. I still have a long road ahead of me but looking back, I have come a long way.

The next and last chapter for this short ebook is one of the most important. Read it, love it, remember it, and use it!

# Chapter 5

## Maintaining your new lifestyle

Have you ever typed a paper or made a new PowerPoint only to forget to save it and have the power go out? It is not any fun what so ever.

As a new minimalist, why would you want to go back to the way things used to be? A cluttered house with more things than you know what to do with. That is why this chapter is so very important

### Step One

This chapter has only one simple rule. This rule will should take precedence over all previous rules.

### **DON'T BUY NEW THINGS!**

I made sure to yell this rule at you. This is how you get in trouble and head back the old life.

Some of you may be saying “but Adam, I have to buy SOME stuff” and you are correct.

I urge you to ask yourself a few simple questions before making a new purchase.

1. Do I really need this?
2. Will it serve more than one purpose?
3. How often will I use it? Once a day? Once a week? Once a month?

If the answer is yes, yes, and at least once a week, sleep on it. Go home and think about the purchase. Think about all you've gone through to simplify your life. Then, if in the morning you are positive this purchase won't end up collecting dust somewhere, feel free to purchase.

The goal is make you really think about what you are buying. Instead of falling into the consumerism trap and making impulse buys, stop for a moment and think. That is all I ask.

## **A journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step**

That is never so true as it is with minimalism. Take that first step and get rid of something. Once you do, you will thank yourself, and hopefully continue on the path. Once you do, you will be free, free to go where you want when you want. The weight on your shoulders will be lifted and you will see life in a new light.

I hope I have inspired some to try this new life style. If you have taken anything away from this short ebook guide, then please feel free to stop by the blog and leave me a comment. I'm always happy to answer any questions and love comments.

[Http://www.vagabondguide.com/blog](http://www.vagabondguide.com/blog)

There are a few other sites that you should check out. They are great people with some very good info.

<http://lifeexcursion.com>

<http://exilelifestyle.com>

<http://www.farbeyondthestars.com>

<http://theminimalistpath.com>

<http://manvsdebt.com>

<http://www.wanderingearl.com>

<http://thelifething.com>