

The Psychology of Clutter – Advanced B2–C1 Reading Worksheet

ARTICLE

Across many homes, clutter has crept in so gradually that people hardly notice how much it weighs on their mood. Psychologists argue that when belongings start piling up, they can chip away at a person's ability to think clearly or settle down after a long day. As work and home life blend together, many individuals feel they are constantly trying to keep on top of mess that seems to spread the moment they turn their back.

Recent studies have shed light on just how strongly clutter can shape emotional wellbeing. In one experiment, volunteers were asked to clear out a small area of their home. Even this simple act helped many of them calm down and regain a sense of control. Researchers say that tidying up removes visual noise, allowing the mind to reset rather than get bogged down by endless reminders of unfinished tasks.

Still, experts warn that clutter can easily spiral out of control if people continue to put off dealing with it. Some barely register the mess, while others feel stressed the moment items start stacking up. To stop the problem from snowballing, specialists suggest breaking tasks into small steps, focusing on steady progress rather than aiming for perfection. Even a short burst of organising can help people wind down and feel more grounded.

TRUE OR FALSE

1. Clutter can influence a person's mood without them realising.
2. Researchers found that tidying a whole house is necessary to feel calmer.
3. Tidying up can help reduce mental overload.
4. Some people are more sensitive to clutter than others.
5. Experts believe clutter cannot spiral out of control.
6. Clearing a small space helped some volunteers regain control.
7. Clutter always stresses everyone equally.
8. Organising tasks into small steps can be helpful.

PHRASE MATCH

Phrases from the article	Meanings (A–J)
1. crept in	A. remove unnecessary items from a place
2. piling up	B. gradually damage or weaken something
3. chip away at	C. delay doing something
4. settle down	D. increasing rapidly and becoming harder to control
5. keep on top of	E. accumulate in large amounts
6. clear out	F. stay in control of a situation or workload
7. calm down	G. unable to make progress because of too many problems
8. bogged down	H. become quieter or more relaxed
9. put off	I. enter or appear slowly and unnoticed
10. snowballing	J. reduce emotional stress or become more relaxed

SYNONYM MATCH

Words from the article	Synonyms (A–J)
1. overwhelmed	A. experts
2. blend	B. expand or move outward
3. regain	C. stable or emotionally balanced
4. spiral	D. signal that prompts action
5. specialists	E. mix together
6. spread	F. notice
7. register	G. recover
8. grounded	H. become uncontrollable
9. task	I. feel unable to cope
10. reminder	J. job or duty

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – STUDENT A

1. Do you think clutter affects your mood? Why or why not?
2. Which areas of your home get messy most quickly?
3. Do you find it easy or difficult to keep on top of clutter?
4. What strategies help you settle down after a stressful day?
5. How do you feel when things start piling up around you?
6. Does cleaning a small area help you calm down?
7. Why do some people notice clutter more than others?
8. How does clutter affect your productivity?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – STUDENT B

1. Do you agree that clutter can chip away at wellbeing?
2. Why do some people put off dealing with mess?
3. How could workplaces reduce visual noise?
4. Have you ever felt bogged down by tasks?
5. Do you think minimalism is becoming more popular?
6. What kind of reminders help you stay organised?
7. Can decluttering improve relationships at home?
8. What habits prevent clutter from snowballing?

ANSWER KEY

TRUE/FALSE: 1 T, 2 F, 3 T, 4 T, 5 F, 6 T, 7 F, 8 T

PHRASE MATCH: 1 i, 2 e, 3 b, 4 h, 5 f, 6 a, 7 j, 8 g, 9 c, 10 d

SYNONYM MATCH: 1 i, 2 e, 3 g, 4 h, 5 a, 6 b, 7 f, 8 c, 9 j, 10 d