

**100 Things
I Learned
as a Minimalist**

Living a Life of
Less but Better

Alex Kwa

100

THINGS I LEARNED AS A MINIMALIST
LIVING A LIFE OF LESS BUT BETTER

ALEX KWA

000

Foreword

The minimalist journey is seldom quick or easy. Few can immediately let go of everything. Like any meaningful endeavor, minimalism takes time, consistency, and discipline.

In my pursuit, I've learned a great deal from other minimalists over the years, which has helped me form my own set of guidelines. Many of them are Japanese minimalists, like Sasaki Fumio or Sibum, who offer a unique perspective. These rules will serve as constant reminders to help build your minimalist muscle.

I hope that they will help you along your journey.

001 **Buy cheap, then buy high quality when it breaks**

Not using a high-quality, pricey item is like not owning it at all. Avoid this by initially buying a cheaper version and only upgrading to a premium one if you find that you use it regularly.

002 **People change their minds easily**

That expensive bag that you think you will use for life might end up collecting dust in your closet. Attempt to trial an item's place in your lifestyle with as little commitment as possible. Rent, borrow, or go to the store multiple times to try it out.

003 **Buy it for life**

When you do decide to buy something, get something high-quality and timeless. This is why most minimalists avoid trends and stick to the classics that endure time.

004 **Buy things that are enough**

Minimalists tend to think that they need the best of something since they own so little. These can be harder to get rid of when your mind changes. Instead, get things that are just enough; at the right size, right price, and right material for how you will use them.

005 **Don't buy just because it's cheap**

I've rarely met a minimalist who loves things bought on a discount, as they are often purchased on impulse. These items usually go unused, resulting in greater loss than savings. People tend to value and use things they bought intentionally, even if they're not discounted.

006



[Outlier's Ultrafine Merino T-Shirt](#)

Only buy from select brands

Filter brands down to those that align with your style and beliefs to simplify buying. When you make a purchase, you'll enjoy what you wear. Choose affordable, accessible brands like Uniqlo for easy replacement.

007

Be ruthless with your clothes

Clothes that don't fit, have holes, look worn, or don't spark joy don't deserve to be on our bodies in the little time we have on this earth. High-quality clothing is so affordable and easily accessible these days that we don't have to think twice about replacing items that have lived their lives.

008

Wear a uniform

Well-known minimalists like Steve Jobs or Gandhi wear a uniform—the same outfit they put on every day. It reduces decision fatigue, so you can focus on critical decisions.

009

Wear only the clothes that you can meet people you admire in

Our time on earth is limited, so we should be able to look and feel comfortable all the time. Look at your outfit in the mirror, and if you would feel embarrassed if someone you admire saw you in it, it is probably not worth being on your body.

010

A half hearted outfit will lead to a half hearted day

Getting dressed is one of the first things we do when we start our day. If you do so without intention, the rest of your day will likely follow suit.

011



Wear black

Most minimalists like black because it's fashionable, always available in stores, easy to match, and doesn't look dirty if you spill something on it.

012

Just for now, not just in case

You rarely need something "just in case." In today's world, almost anything can be acquired with a few clicks, so consider whether holding on to items for hypothetical scenarios is truly necessary.

- 013 **Reflect relentlessly**
With every item you get rid of, reflect with gusto on the reason. It's a valuable lesson that helps you learn about your preferences.
- 014 **Sell, give, toss, in that order**
Assess the return and cost, including time and energy, of each of these actions. Sometimes tossing, while seemingly wasteful, earns you the most.
- 015 **If you are unsure, it's most likely you don't need it**
People are usually very sure about the things they love. They won't ever think of letting essentials go, not one bit. Uncertainty is a sure sign that you don't actually love something.
- 016 **Those who do not focus on the present have a hard time decluttering**
Holding on to items from your past, like high school yearbooks or keychains from trips, or stockpiling for future use, makes decluttering difficult. Focus on the present and let go of the past and future to simplify your space.
- 017 **You will almost never regret the things you get rid of**
Decluttering provides benefits like additional space, saved time, and potential earnings from selling items. Seasoned minimalists understand their preferences and rarely regret their decisions, knowing they can always replace something if needed. (See #018)
- 018 **The worst that can happen is that you buy it back**
For most things you get rid of, it is usually easy to replace. Some might think this is a waste of money, but if an item gets in the way, it becomes worth it. Use The Minimalists' 20/20 rule and adjust it based on your situation.
- 019 **Things that you truly care about become clear when you declutter**
When too much stuff no longer becomes a problem, the real problems of your life becomes clear for you to work on. If you want to find your passion or how you really want to live, the first step is to declutter.

020

Get rid of “maybe” things

Maybe I'll use it one day. Maybe it will come back into fashion. Maybe it'll grow on me. The things that you are sure about are the ones you love the most and should keep.

021

Get rid of the things you are embarrassed for others to look at

Imagine your favorite people coming to visit your place. Do you have something that you would be embarrassed for them to see? These are the things you probably don't need in your life.

022

Keep only the things you would buy again

If you lost something, would you spend the same amount of money to get it back? If the answer is no, it's probably something you can do without.

023

Decluttering is the best way to self improve

Decluttering is something that people of all ages, genders, locations, and situations can do. It helps you learn about yourself (See #013) and is the easiest and most accessible way of self-improvement.

024

Challenge yourself to less

You won't actually know what you really need until you try living without it (See #090). Challenge yourself to live with a certain number of things or in a smaller apartment to see if you really need what you have now.

025

Detach

Let go of the attachment to material possessions and detach your sense of self-worth from external factors.

026

Simplify your diet

Adopt a minimalist approach to nutrition by focusing on whole, unprocessed foods and minimizing food waste. You can also reduce the number of meals you have a day.

027

Declutter digitally

Declutter your digital life by organizing files, deleting unused apps, and unsubscribing from unnecessary emails. Regularly review and simplify your digital space to minimize distractions and promote clarity, enhancing productivity and peace of mind.

028

There are few minimalists who are poor

I know many poor people with a lot of things. Because they spend time and money hoarding, they have less time to focus on making or saving money. Instead, most minimalists are rich because they are intentional with how they use their resources.

029

Real wealth is not money

Minimalism is often the means to attaining an intangible reward. Relationships, peace, love, and doing the things you love comes to mind.

030

People who can't do anything without money, won't be able to do anything when they have money

Creativity, resourcefulness, and grit is present within each of us. Those who attribute inaction to lack of money, will be the same even when they have money.

031

Material things won't make you happy

Experiences and loved ones are far more valuable (See #085). Minimalism teaches that true fulfillment comes from meaningful connections, health, and cherished memories. Instead of accumulating things, focus on the simple joys and spending time with people you care about.

032

Comparison is the thief of joy

This innocuous human behavior is the root of discontent. Never compare in either direction. Where possible, avoid content like on social media that would lead to this.

033

It's okay to think

Some grit their teeth and toss something they are unsure about. It's similar to people who dive straight into extreme diets which results in binge eating as they rebound. It's okay to put items you aren't sure about in a pile and come back to them later.

034

Use the things that you feel wasteful to use

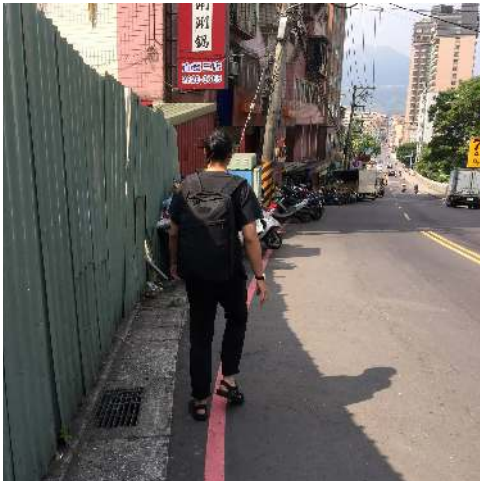
Some people feel it is a waste to use something expensive they bought or precious given to them. Tell yourself you and your love ones deserve to enjoy the best of what you own, right now.

035

Those who are careless with their things, are usually careless with relationships

There is a relationship between how people treat their things and other people. Lack of care in the things you own, often means the same with relationship. As you become intentional about the things you own, it builds intentionality into your personality.

036



With the GORUCK GR1

Travel simpler and slower

Travel can become stressful with a packed itinerary. Learn to pack light, do less, have less expectations, and enjoy the simple things more.

037

Embrace Ma 間

The Japanese concept of Ma 間 teaches us the importance of space and emptiness in our lives. It highlights the value of silence, stillness, and pauses, allowing meaningful elements to stand out. Embracing Ma 間 provides clarity, mental rejuvenation, and appreciation for the preciousness of what we have.

038

Free things aren't free

Things cost space to keep, time to maintain, mental capacity to think about. The cost is incurred again when you have to dispose of them. Think twice before accepting something that is seemingly free.

- 039 **The number of things you own equals to the amount of housekeeping you have to do**
The more things you accumulate, the more difficult housekeeping will be. You not only have to maintain the things, but the space around it gets harder to clean.
- 040 **Cables are hideous**
Avoid devices with excessive cables. Or require different or specific types of cables. Think wireless, or if you even need the device.
- 041 **Decide the address for your things**
Make sure each item has a dedicated spot in your home. Plan in advance where you will keep something before you buy it. Return the items to their address each time.
- 042 **Place things according to the flow of your day**
Have items where you pass (See #041), such that you can naturally reach for them. Items should match the flow of your life, and not the other way around.
- 043 **Organizational goods can be dangerous**
Many try to organize clutter away, but this can hide the problem since you can't see what's behind the white Muji boxes. Try not to keep things into boxes, but instead, have them in the open so you can see exactly what you have.
- 044 **Avoid storing in leftover spaces**
It's easy to try to optimize your storage space by stuffing things into every corner or gap you see. This creates a cluttered and stuffy space. Leave room around your things so they can breathe.
- 045 **Don't store things where you can't reach easily**
Trying to optimize every space (See #044) will result in you trying to store things that are too high up or too far back, making it hard to reach. Eventually, you'll forget you have it or use it less since they aren't integrated into the flow of your life (See #042).

- 046 **Maintenance is a pain in the ass**
Nice things usually need some maintenance, which cost time, effort, and money. Opt for things that have no maintenance or are easy to replace.
- 047 **One in, one out**
The simplest rule to control the number of things you own; getting rid of an item when you obtain another. I recommend getting rid first, or you might end up keeping both.
- 048 **Invest in multifunctional items**
For things that you don't use often, avoid single purpose items. Like a peeler when a knife can peel and do much more.
- 049 **The number of things you own translates to the number of the worries you have**
People with many possessions worry about things like the stress of cleaning up, lack of organization, or little money left at the end of the month. When you reduce your possessions, you reduce your worries.
- 050 **Things have value only when you use them**
Things that you simply possess but do not use is equivalent to not having them at all, no matter how expensive they are. Only keep things that you love using, touching, seeing, or smelling.
- 051 **Think about what you will keep if you only have a few months to live**
If you have little time left, there will be things that you won't use or can't finish using. No one knows how long they will live, so think about what you will need to live without regrets right now.
- 052 **Keep only the things in your ideal life**
Everyone has an idea of how they want to live. There are things that will help you work towards that ideal, or get in the way. For example, if you want to live a healthy lifestyle, you might want to keep the dumbbells and let go of the snack pantry. Keep only the things that will move you closer to your ideal self.

053

Go compact

Smaller and lighter things are often enough (See #004). They take up less space and are more portable. Most people don't need the biggest or the best of everything.



With the [GORUCK GR1](#), [Outlier Bombdeux](#), and [GORUCK MACV-2](#)

054

Beware the hidden costs

There's a hidden cost to everything you purchase. The cost of maintenance, your time looking for it, and the space it takes in your home. Weigh all the costs to decide if something is truly worth it.

055

The "someday" in "someday I'll use it" will never come

It is an excuse so we won't have to deal with it. It is a good reason for you to let something go if that is what you tell yourself.

056

It's okay to love things

Most minimalists love things more than non-minimalists. They'll do everything to make sure they have the best of the few things they own. Minimalism isn't about denouncing things, but being intentional about owning them.

057

The count is not the goal, but a good indication

Some minimalists raise eyebrows at those who count their belongings. While the count is not the goal, it can serve as an indication of progress. Do what works for you.

058

Minimalism is a muscle you train

It's rare for minimalists to be able to declutter everything in one go. It takes training and each item you declutter makes it easier to let go the next one.

059

Minimalism is not supposed to boring, but it's okay if it is

Having few things isn't the end goal. It's suppose to make way for what matters. If you end up feeling bored because you're minimizing everything away, you should spend time thinking about what exactly you want. If anything, you have the space to do so now.

060

It's possible to over-minimize

Like having too many things, having too few possessions can get in the way. You want to find a balance that works for you, so you can spend time on what matters.

061

The clutter in your space is a reflection in the clutter in your mind

Think of the calm of sitting in an empty train versus the stress you feel in a packed one. This illustrates how having space around you helps your mind breathe and give calmness.

062

When you have less stuff, you discover how you really want to live

When you get rid of things and reflect ruthlessly (See #013), you learn about your preferences and yourself. With the things you keep, you learn what you are passionate about; like when I chose to keep travel backpacks, I learn about my passion for travel. Your priorities become crystal clear.

063

Clutter is a symptom

There are underlying issues that lead to clutter, like lack of time to organize or stress that prevents you from focusing on it. Identify and deal with the root problem first.

064

If you haven't used it for a year, there's a reason you won't ever use it

If you haven't used something for a long time, there is likely a reason you don't actually need it and that you should get rid of it.

065

You lose something as you gain some thing

Many think of getting something as an addition. But you lose things like your time thinking about it, the money you spent on it, or the space you give up for it.

066 **Start with subtracting, not adding**

Many people think that to improve their lives, they have to add something to it; something they do or own. Instead, think of what you can subtract from your lives, like things, activities, or relationships that don't move you towards your ideal self (See #052)

067 **Minimalism is a journey**

There isn't an endpoint to minimalism. It doesn't end when you own x number of items. It is a constant process to know what possessions give value and what distracts you. It's a lifelong journey to learn who you are.

068 **Our possessions don't define us**

Many associate their worth with the nice things they own, but things are just that—things, regardless of cost. A rich man on his deathbed won't reminisce about his expensive watch, but rather the relationships he built and the impact he left behind.

069 **Minimalism is subjective**

There isn't a rule book to minimalism. It looks different to everyone. There is no need to conform to a widely-accepted methodology, but instead focus on what works for you.

070 **Minimalism is a gift**

Minimalism helps unlock your greatest potential and makes space for you to care about those around you. It gives purpose, intentionality, and clarity, for you to give value. The world benefits from minimalism.

071 **Reducing your desire for things is better than reducing your things**

Consumerism is hard to ignore, but when you are able to do so, it becomes a powerful catalyst to helping you reduce your things with ease, and to pursue your truest passion.

072 **Minimalism creates space to do nothing**

Being able to do nothing is one of the greatest luxury in life. When your time and mind not on things or the accumulation of things, you no longer focus on doing, but simply being.

- 073 **Minimalists know what is necessary, versus what they own for appearances**
As you start to filter your belongings, your intention for owning each item becomes clear. Things you own to show off, or to change how people think of you, are most often unnecessary.
- 074 **“Happiness” is a trap**
People often believe they need more money, things, or power to be happy. However, this pursuit can lead to unhappiness, especially when comparing with others. Instead, seek contentment and fulfillment.
- 075 **Be realistic about what you can change**
Focus your energy and resources on what you can control, a common tactic from the playbook of stoicism. Say “no” (See #088) to trying to change what you can’t control.
- 076 **Surround yourself with minimalism**
Listen to podcasts, read blogs, watch YouTube, be part of a community about minimalism. Don’t let society influence you, but be intentional about the influence you surround yourself with.
- 077 **Stop caring about what others think**
You’ll realize how many things you have just for appearances (See #073) once you stop caring about other’s opinion. People who don’t accept you for who you are probably aren’t worth having around anyway.
- 078 **Enjoy minimizing**
It’s often hard to continue something you don’t enjoy. Learn to enjoy the process, like being creative with recipes when you have less cookware, or your outfit when you have less to choose from.
- 079 **Minimalism gives your life meaning**
Intentional living gives life meaning by focusing on what you love and value. Minimalism teaches you to prioritize and make conscious choices, enhancing presence and gratitude. Simplifying your life leads to greater happiness and fulfillment.

- 080 **Earn admiration through character, not possessions**
Minimalism reveals that attributes like kindness and integrity hold more value than possessions. Leading a positive, impactful life garners genuine respect and appreciation.
- 081 **Find beauty in imperfection and embrace the transient nature of life**
The Japanese philosophy of wabi sabi encourages appreciating the simple, natural, and incomplete aspects of the world. This philosophy fosters acceptance, gratitude, and a deeper connection to the present moment.
- 082 **Minimalism can't be forced on others**
It must be a personal choice. It's important to respect individual readiness and preferences, even within the same household. Never declutter someone else's belongings without their permission.
- 083 **Minimalism is challenging**
It demands introspection, deliberate actions, and sustained effort. Balancing this lifestyle with daily responsibilities is tough, but gradual, consistent changes can yield significant results. Though difficult, the journey is ultimately worthwhile.
- 084 **Downsize**
Many think that nice things and a flashy lifestyle is the mark of success. Don't give in to consumerist society, instead, see where you can downsize to be stress-free.
- 085 **Time and experiences over things**
Look to spend your money on services that can buy you time and memorable experiences. These are often more worth it than physical objects and does not create clutter.
- 086 **Choose the things want to use now, over things you might use later**
The things you are using now are infinitely more valuable (See #034), since you get to enjoy the value right this moment. It's easy to decide to get rid of something if you use this rule.

087

Quality over quantity

Optimize for having one high-quality item, over many low-quality items. You'll use and enjoy it more and reduce unnecessary stockpiles. Even if it cost more, it will pay off in the long run.

088

Say "no" more often

It takes courage to live with intentionality, because it means you'll have to say no to the things that aren't aligned with your goals and lifestyle. Each time you say "no", is a vote for your ideal life (See #052). Learn to love saying no.

089

Use the 80/20 rule

Also known as the Pareto Principle, you want to focus on giving the 20% input that will result in the 80% output. Identify the biggest impact actions and prioritize them over all others. (See #075)

090

People don't need many things to live

In a world where everything is a few clicks away, there are few things you can't live without. Most people conflate their wants with needs. It is until they pare down to the essentials, then can they see that most things are distractions.

091

Minimalism is about prioritizing values over possessions

It's about making intentional and purposeful life choices. It involves defining what truly matters to you and creating space for those priorities by eliminating the unnecessary.

092

Memories are within you

And not in those so-called sentimental items. Your memory is what will keep the experience forever. If you need a reminder, take a picture of the item instead.

093

Letting someone enjoy the act of giving, is respect enough

Many think twice about letting go of gifts. After all, it is a sign of respect to keep what is given. I say that once the giver has enjoyed the act of giving, there isn't anything more you need to do. And certainly not keep something if it no longer gives you value.

- 094 **When you die, almost all of your belongings becomes rubbish**
What is valuable to you, will likely be a burden to others when you pass. Your family will be left to deal with them, and, of which, almost all will have no value to them. The legacy you should leave behind isn't your stuff.
- 095 **Memories that need objects to remind you, aren't important memories**
People will always remember important occasions even without something to remind them. If you need an object to remind you, the memory isn't one that is important to you in the first place.
- 096 **Expiry period begins on last used**
Imagine each item has an expiry based on the last time you used it. It could be anywhere from 6 months to 2 years. If you haven't used it in that time, it's unlikely you'll ever need it.
- 097 **Treat your neighborhood like part of your home**
The supermarket becomes your pantry, the public bath is your bathroom, and the coin laundry is your laundry room. In doing so, you'll realize you don't need much stuff at home.
- 098 **Make minimalism part of your routine**
Set aside time each morning to clean your home or time in the afternoon to get rid of the things you don't need. Like any habit, you need to show up and get used to doing in regularly (See #058).
- 099 **Automate**
Recurring tasks, such as paying your bills or investing, can be automated to allow you to focus on important tasks.
- 100 **Share and collaborate**
Embrace community and collaboration by sharing resources, skills, and experiences with others, fostering connection and mutual support. Sharing reduces the need for one to hold on to items that only they will use.

THANK YOU

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