Better look in less time with 7 holiday decorating tips

I HAVE THIS vision of how holiday decorating is supposed to be, probably because I've watched too many Hallmark movies.

It features a happy family putting up the tree, while the good dog sleeps by the fire. The room smells of hot cider and popcorn and Nat King Cole croons carols in the background as everyone takes joyful turns hanging ornaments and stockings.

In reality, the kids are in their rooms plugged into their devices, a fight has ensued over tangled strands of half-dead Christmas lights, the dog is lifting its leg on the tree, and the family room looks a Christmas store tossed up its contents after first running the merchandise through a wood chipper.

AT HOME WITH
Marni Jameson

Holidays so often seem better in the abstract.

After years, decades, of putting up and taking down Christmas decorations, and having my expectations fall like the ball on New Year's Eve, and feeling each year that the process was too much work and too little fun, I decided there had to be a better way.

My annual frustration led me to figure out a few shortcuts that result in getting the decorating done faster with a better look and less cursing. I also spoke with Orlando organizer Kim Krogh, who both validated my ideas and offered more of her own.

The mulled results boil down to three practices: Limit your décor. Coordinate colors for cohesion. Use logic when storing. Here are seven ways to help you do just that:

1. Edit and purge holiday décor yearly

I know of no law that says you can never get rid of a holiday decoration. I also don't know of any prize that goes to the tree with the most ornaments.

However, a look around suggests many believe otherwise. Yes, ornaments can stir sentimental feelings, but it's really OK to throw them away.

If your kids are in college and you still have their preschool picture glued inside a frame they made out of popsicle sticks, you might need an ornament intervention.

2. Practice color coherence

One way to let go is to choose a unified color scheme. This will not only help you streamline and consolidate your holiday decorations but will also make your holiday décor cohere.

For a unified look, try picking one main color, like red, magenta or teal; add one metallic color such as silver, gold or bronze; and add a white, clear or black accent. One color trio could be magenta, silver and black.

When decorating the tree, first hang solid-color ornaments in your base color, then layer on special collectable ornaments and filler.

Photo courtesy of Dreamstime.com

It's a wrap — Streamline your holiday gift wrapping and get a better look under the tree by using only a couple of coordinated wrapping papers and unifying ribbon or yarn. Red and brown craft paper, as shown here, makes a great base.