

Household Organization

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Educational Objectives

1. Learn effective household organization tips.
2. Simplify your home or office space.
3. Use preventative measures to stay organized.

Organizing and staying organized can be a daunting task. How many times have you organized and reorganized only to find yourself right back where you started within a few weeks or months? We often blame our disorganization on lack of storage space when in actuality, it's usually the result of having too much stuff.

Interestingly, research shows that 80 percent of what we own, we don't even use. We live in a society that values "stuff" – we go to the store and the temptations are enormous – there are big sales and new gadgets to make our lives easier on every shelf. In reality, new gadgets just take up more space!

Impulse buying results in a lot of our clutter problems.

Clutter can also be a result of delaying decisions about what to do with our "stuff" in the first place. One example is the mail – we put it on the counter or on a shelf and say to ourselves, "I'll deal with it later." It piles up until it

becomes a clutter catastrophe, taking hours to sort through and organize. Many times we blame our disorganization on lack of organizational items or systems. Research shows that sales of home organization products in the United States reached \$8.5 billion in 2014 and are expected to reach \$10.3 billion by 2019, yet organization remains a big problem in many households.

Some of the best organizing tips will not work if you do not commit to staying organized, plan ahead and plan to purge a lot of your stuff. Simplifying your life and decluttering will make a world of difference and lead to less stress and more free time. This lesson will offer some tips for decluttering, getting organized, and staying organized.

Getting Started

Before you start, make a list. Prioritize the list so you know which areas of your home you need to complete first. Also, commit to



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finishing one area before beginning another. Additionally, decide on a local charity where you can donate items you will be giving away. If you plan to sell some items, have a date for a sale set in the near future so the items won't be cluttering your closets, basement or garage. Start the organization process by using the four-box method. Obtain three large boxes and a large trash can. Label each box "Put Away," "Give Away/Sell" and "Storage." Items that you want to toss, obviously go in the trash can.

After you declutter each section of a room, take time to put items away that you want to keep (find a permanent home for these items). Put the box of items to give away in the back of your car immediately (if you put them aside or in the garage they will never make it to the charity). Mark the box of items you want to sell and place in the garage (have a plan to have a sale in the very near future), and take trash items out quickly so you don't have time to second guess yourself.

The four-box method can work for any quick declutter tasks like clearing out your closet, cleaning out a drawer or even for a weekend spring cleaning.

Organizing Your Closets

We constantly clean out our closets – reorganizing them by packing and unpacking clothes seasonally to create more space. So much time is spent

organizing our closets and drawers when research shows that we only wear 20 percent of the clothes we own 80 percent of the time. Everything else takes up space just in case we want to wear it once during the season.



First, turn all of your clothes hangers around so that the hooks are facing away from you. Every time you wear an outfit, turn the hanger the other way when you place it back in the closet. At the end of the season, get rid of any clothes/outfits that you did not wear. Second, hang items up as outfits – pants, shirt, jacket and scarf – hang them all together on one hanger. This saves space and time.

Second, turn shoes heel to toe to create more space. Buy an inexpensive shoe organizer or stackable shoe shelves to maximize the space.

Third, hang scarves and purses on a hanger with shower curtain hooks. Buy an inexpensive jewelry organizer with clear pockets and hang on the closet door.

Finally, to maximize drawer space, use a shelf to stack sweaters and jeans by using dividers to keep them from falling over.

Easy/Inexpensive Tips to Get Organized and Stay Organized

There are lots of products on the market for organizing your home, but there are also a lot of "do-it-yourself" and inexpensive ways to help you maximize your space and organize your life. Some of these items might already be in your home, while others might only cost a few dollars but can make a big difference.

- Everything should have a home – a space where it belongs.
- Use labels – anything that is being stored in a box or container should be labeled on all sides.
- Put a trash can in every room in the house. Find nice decorative trash cans for your living room.
- OCI–OGO (one comes in – one goes out) rule: When you buy something new, toss out something old.
- Store sheet sets in under-bed storage containers in the room where they will be used.
- Place a box in the back of your car for items to give to charity. If you keep it in your house, it will never get there.





- Tape an envelope on the refrigerator or near the phone for pizza and food delivery coupons.
- Keep a toy basket in rooms for quick clean ups – even pets should have a toy basket.
- Photocopy recipes you use and love, and place them in a three-ring binder. Get rid of space-hogging cookbooks.
- Use vacuum-sealed storage bags to create more space.
- Buy a tote for your car to keep items like umbrellas, bottled water, pillow, paper towels, plastic bags, blankets, jackets, tissues, maps, etc. This also helps eliminate unnecessary purchases when away from home.
- Stop at the waste basket every day on your way in from checking the mail. Immediately throw away junk mail. Have an accordion file system on your counter or desk for bills, receipts and coupons. Keep this in an easy-to-access location. Purchase a shredder and place it near the same waste basket. Be sure to shred anything containing confidential information!
- Use an over-the-door shoe organizer to store items from a junk drawer. Have a pocket for screws, scissors, nails, cell phone cords, paper clips, batteries, flashlights, tape, glue, etc. Hang it on the inside of your pantry door or a closet.
- Use a suspension rod under sinks to hang cleaning products, water bottles, etc., to create more space for other items.
- Fold clothes and fill in the drawer horizontally to create more space and make it easier to spot that perfect shirt!

Five Biggest Organization Mistakes

1. Not thinking about prevention – Once you've organized, all of the work will be for nothing if you don't create a plan to prevent disorganization from happening again. Commit 10 minutes a day to putting things where they belong.
2. Buying organizing systems and products before you have a plan – Don't go on a shopping spree for organizing products until you know what you need. It's best to start the process of decluttering before you decide what types of organizers you need.
3. Not having a storage and disposal plan – Starting the process of organizing and decluttering without a plan for disposing of unwanted items can create even more havoc when you end up with piles of items that just take up valuable space.
4. Not creating clutter-free zones in your home – Make it a rule that the kitchen table is not a dumping zone. Clear this space every day to ensure that the table is used for its intended purpose – eating together as a family. Countertops can also be clutter-free zones with the same rules.
5. Not communicating your organization system with others – All of your work to organize will be for nothing if you don't let others know your plan.



Make the Commitment to Stay Organized

Life gets chaotic. You work hard to get organized only to find yourself living in a world of disorganization once again. You have to be intentional about organization. Once you figure out a system that works, you have to make staying organized part of your routine. When you create a “to do” list, include time to organize. When you create a cleaning schedule, include time to organize and reorganize. In order to stay on top of organization, you have to eliminate some time wasters and commit yourself to



staying on top of the clutter. Once you do this, it will become a habit and a normal part of your life.

Activity:

Using accordion folders and labels (if needed), make an organization system for paper clutter. Each participant can label as needed. Some examples include coupons, manuals, receipts, recipes, bills, shredding, recycling, etc.

Sources

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