

Let's Get Organized!

Easy and Simple Strategies to
Getting (and Staying) Organized

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Introduction

“You can find pictures anywhere. It is simply a matter of noticing things and organizing them. You just have to care about what is around you and have a concern with humanity and the human comedy.”

-Elliott Erwitt

How we spend out time says a lot about who we are

If you are simply too tired or do not have adequate time to do anything in the evenings, then your daily routine is out of balance and you need to make adjustments.

Your work can be too difficult or unsuitable, or you may not be making full use of your hours during your day or evening. A good balance of your time is needed for work, goals, recreation, and relaxation. Take a close look at your daily routine, examine your findings and come up with a plan. Be prepared to follow your plan and with this, you can become better organized.

Why be better organized?

Being busy will keep your mind off worry because you will not be thinking of two different things at one time. You can make good use of your time away from work to increase your knowledge of things and life, to work at a hobby or project, and then to relax and be content. This is good balance and when you are better balanced you are better organized.

Perhaps you are a single parent and in a bit of a time crunch each day. Make a point to sit and relax each day and plan. If you are careful you should be able to find just a few hours each day to apply yourself to being better organized.

"I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by conscious endeavor." - Henry Thoreau (1817-1862)

Most of us use only a small amount of our true capabilities and we can all do so much more. You can learn new things. This will give you new purpose in life and a feeling of achievement. Read nonfiction books to increase your knowledge of everyday things in

life and to learn new skills or to improve on existing ones. All of this will help you to be better organized.

The more organized you are the more time you will have for yourself. As you become better organized, take on a new after hours project. Start with something small and work your way up to devoting more and more time to your project. Perhaps you can take on a new woodworking project, for example. Once you complete it, you will feel good about yourself and how you are spending your new, organized time.

With a place for everything and everything in its place, you are freed up in body and mind to take on new endeavors.

If you are under a lot of stress, a more passive and relaxing undertaking might be just what you need, at least to start with. For just one day a week, or a few hours on certain days, set aside time for your own unique enjoyment. When you do this, staying organized will not feel as much of a chore. You will naturally wish to remain organized so that you will have more time for yourself.

Take a walk in the park, listen to lovely music, read an interesting novel, leisurely work in the yard, or watch a bit of TV, these are all of the perks in time from staying organized.

"When I go into my garden with a spade, and dig a bed, I feel such an exhilaration and health that I discover that I have been defrauding myself all this time in letting others do for me what I should have done with my own hands." - Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)

Remembering to Organize

Being well organized takes lots of time and effort and there is a lot to remember. Below are good tips to help you to remember it all:

1. Jot it down. With the many details that you have to remember in any given day, why should you try to keep it all in a memory bank? At the very moment that you remember something needs to be done, the very best thing to do is write it down. Then, just as you need to recall it, it will be there for you in an instant.

2. Keep it all in one place. Once you have developed the knack of writing everything down, your next step will be to keep your writing all in one place. You will remember better this way. Otherwise, you are going to spend valuable time searching for your notes.

3. Stay healthy. A keen memory is a well-nourished mind. Eat healthy; get plenty of rest and lots of good exercise. These will all see you through to having a good memory, staying focused and being alert.

4. Record your every thought. You might find yourself driving when a good idea about organizing comes to you or you might recall something that you really need to write down. No need to pull over and start writing, record instead! Pull off to the side of the road and use a small hand held tape recorder. This is a wonderful tool to carry around with you, to record your thoughts, or your parking space number, or even a memorable telephone number you see on a billboard as you drive by. Use your handy recorder to be your second eyes and ears.

5. Call ahead. When you are at the office and you want to do something when you arrive back home, call ahead to your answering machine and leave yourself a message. As soon as you get home you can listen to your message and remember exactly what you wanted to do.

6. Be confident in yourself. If you keep saying you have a bad memory, you will probably continue to have a bad memory. It is important to have a motivated, I CAN remember attitude.

7. Handy email reminders. There are many good and free e-mail reminder services available. You can type in what you want to remember, such as a welcome party, anniversary or special event, and you will receive an e-mail reminder when the date is approaching. This is a terrific way to jog your memory by Internet.

8. Use sticky notes. Those wonderful, little sticky notes are the next best thing to sliced bread! They are amazing as memory helpers. Want to remember something prior to leaving your home? Just mark it down on a Post-It Note and stick it to the inside of your door. The bright, neon colors will be great to catch your eye as you are leaving. You will not likely miss it! Need to make an urgent call first thing in the morning? Leave a Post-It Note on your telephone.

9. Use timers and alarms. Take advantage of alarm clocks and timers throughout your day. Have to take the clothes out of the dryer by 12 noon? Set your alarm clock to remind you. Want to leave for the ladies luncheon by 7 p.m.? Set your timer to beep a few minutes before it is time to start to get ready.

10. Visual memory joggers. Visual reminders will help you remember and stay focused. Use visual reminders for remembering your goals. If your goal is to take a trip to a Ireland in a few years, keep a magazine photograph of Ireland right on your desk. If your

goal is to lose 30 lbs. in six months, find a picture or ornament that will help remind you of this goal each day.

Say Good-bye to Clutter

Now that you have a good system to remember your tasks at hand, the next big step will be to get rid of clutter. Clutter diminishes a smile, dampens the spirit, and so should not be tolerated.

It is very easy to find any given room in a cluttered mess, but it takes some hard work to de-clutter and organize.

Many people say that one of their favorite things to do when stressed out is to clean! Hard to imagine, right? Well, it is true. Cleaning gives order and purpose to your life, even if only in smaller chunks at a time.

We are not just talking about moving around clutter from one shelf to another. We are talking about de-cluttering every room of your home. Say good-bye to the dust, say good-bye to the junk – say hello to room to breathe and move around! Now, doesn't that sound delightful?

Start out by drawing up a list of what you absolutely want done. Think about those leaning tower of Pisa papers in the den, then move slowly into the family room. See any piles of old photos just crying out to be placed in a photo album? Write that one down. How about those piles of clothing sitting in the bottom of your daughters closet just waiting for a mother's touch. Write that one down, too!

By now, if you are clever, you see a list of very workable, one-at-a-time chores that can be assigned throughout a busy day. The idea is to get started and work your way around. By the end of the day, you will have a beautiful, uncluttered home as your reward!

Do not become discouraged if your attempt to enlist your husband and children runs a-muck. Just write them down on your list as those who require an attitude adjustment and then save that chore for next time. One can hope!

If you are altogether frank about it, you really do not want a second pair of meddling hands anyway; some chores are best left to only one pair of hands. That way you can be sure that the chores will be done right the first time.

Best Secrets to Getting and Staying Organized

- Tell yourself (and believe) that some degree of clutter with a child is going to happen no matter what!
- Begin with messes and clutter that you see every day. Work on organizing your kitchen and family room before your hallway closet.
- Assign everything in your house a place. This way when your family searches for something they need, they will know exactly where to find it and where to put it away.
- Use this same principle to organize your silverware, with clearly defined places for every fork and knife, or drawers for ties and socks or, underwear. Think in this same way for every aspect of your home. This will save many hours of searching for things. It will dramatically cut down on the clutter of items left out "for now" or "until I find a place for it." Develop a new mantra: everything has its place and a place for everything!
- Enlist a new rule: throw out one old thing for every new purchase that enters your home.
- When using stairs, never go up or down them empty-handed. Always grab some items that belong to upstairs rooms and quickly put it away while you are there.
- Make a mental note to observe what things pile up in your house and where they cluster, and then come up with a place nearby that becomes the official home where those things will reside. Introduce baskets, shelves, and folders for this purpose. They work well. Set aside one basket for you and your partner for incoming mail, bills, and receipts and letters.
- Create a number of brightly marked folders for discount coupons, invitations and directions, and other time-sensitive papers that just clutter your counters.
- Keep items that are used frequently in places where you can reach them without stooping or bending, and store them close to the place they will be needed.
- Use drawer dividers for socks, underwear, lingerie, and tiny items, to keep them separated and organized.

- Hang hooks for your keys and purse at the entry to your home, so each time you walk in, you can hang them up.
- Establish one defined place in your house for storing library books, and end a house-wide hunt when it is time to read or return them.
- Get rid of all junk drawers, or allow yourself just one that you clear out once a week or more. When you establish certain items are being used repeatedly, designate a drawer for those.
- Things you don't need any longer:
 - Magazines you meant to read but have never taken the time for
 - Expired medications
 - Clothes you no longer wear
 - Sunscreen that's expired or more than one year old
 - Extra paper or plastic grocery bags
 - Makeup and samples you have never worn
 - Cookbooks you rarely use. Cut out your favorite recipes only
 - Organize your coupons and throw out all that have expired
 - Stuff your crumpled plastic bags from your grocer inside a cardboard roll like a hand towel roll. Keep under your sink.

Getting rid of your clutter and organizing your home top to bottom will free your mind to remember your daily chores. Be vigilant about cleaning about once a month and you will find it much easier to keep up, week-by-week.

The Emotional Toll of CLUTTER

Each area of your home provides you with a unique form of comfort. Comfort and clutter cannot co-exist. Clutter and mess only serves to bring unbalance and will dampen any good spirit. It stands to reason that, give up the clutter and bring in the peace of mind.

De-clutter your kitchen

Your kitchen is regarded as the heart of your home and for a good reason. Here you are nourished and provided for, even if you are dining on a frozen entrée zapped in the microwave rather than a homemade meal lovingly presented by Mom. An untidy and cluttered kitchen makes it hard to nourish yourself and others, on both physical and emotional. How you care for your kitchen is a hot clue to whether you are giving proper

attention to your own nourishment and that of others. Cleaning up and de-cluttering your kitchen will open space for you to receive the support and comfort that you need in life.

De-clutter your living and dining room

These are special places where you socialize with family and friends. Here you engage with the world while being at home through watching television, reading the paper or discussing current events with old friends over dinner. Clutter can turn these otherwise special and social spaces into dens of isolation, especially if the mess is so bad that it has been a time since you have invited people over. Look carefully at your living and dining rooms to see what they say about your relationships. Are they important to you? Are you hiding yourself from others, by burying yourself in nasty clutter?

De-clutter your hallways

You need clear hallways to navigate through your home. Your clutter in your hallways prevents important connections between different areas of your home and your life. Look at your hallways and see what it says about the rest of your life. Do they contain good lighting and are they easily navigable, or do they cause confusion and trip you up? If you feel a disconnection between work and family, self and others, what you need to be done and your obligations, it may be time to give your hallways some good organizing.

De-clutter your bathrooms

Each day we use this important space to meet the world. We begin our days from this room. Clutter in the bathroom can mean you don't take pride in how you look and feel. How can you feel clean when using a cluttered, dirty bathroom? A clean, well-decorated bathroom is a tranquil sanctuary for rejuvenation and self-care. Scented soaps, attractive accessories, and fragrant candles all take their place here. This is beauty for the mind and soul. You can beautify your life by organizing and cleaning this important room. Take the time to transform your bathroom into a place of refuge and this will bring a sense of the sacred into your morning and evening personal-care rituals.

De-clutter the bedroom

Your bedroom is for sleeping and intimacy, and it functions as a place of renewal for self and relationships. Clutter in the bedroom is worse than in any room. It is anything but restful and peaceful. If you are feeling "wired and tired," creating order out of chaos in this most personal space will help you relax and to let go of the stresses of the day. Then you will get a good night's sleep or enjoy some special time with your partner. Of all of your rooms, this one is the most critical for being organized and peaceful.

De-clutter your closets

Closets are everything hidden, unknown, or unrecognized. When we fill our closets with clutter, we harness our ability to be intuitive and insightful. Cluttered closets can indicate problems that you may not even be aware of but which block your progress through life, work, and relationships. Keeping the closet door closed is not an obvious solution. Organizing your closets IS!

De-clutter your attic and basement

A cluttered attic causes you to feel under pressure. It is not easy to feel good about the future when there is so much stuff "hanging about and over your head." Organize those boxes of yesteryear and you will feel ten pounds lighter, instantly! The basement and other below-ground storage areas are thought to be holders of the subconscious mind, so take the time and have that clutter cleaned up!

De-clutter your garage

Think of your car as a symbol of your agility, independence, and ability to be self-propelled in life. If there's so much junk piled high in your garage that you can barely lift the garage door, it is time to organize. Do this and be prepared to move forward in your life, as well.

Stop thinking of de-cluttering as a terrific, and start thinking of it as one of the most effective self-improvement exercises available to you. Every magazine and piece of paper you place in the recycle and every book you give back to the library will liberate you. Just as giving those older items to charity, will. Free yourself now of clutter and open the flood gates of joy and energy into your life.

Turn Clutter into Harmony

If a primary goal is to exist in a clutter-free environment, think of devising a system in which to operate freely. With a smart system, you will have valuable free time. Having more time to spend your hours doing what you enjoy most is everyone's goal in life. Using a system, you will have a method of doing something that might otherwise be a strain. You will have a new way of simplifying a task or operation.

Paper clutter is a very good example. We find papers thrown here, there and everywhere. Loose paper can be found in every area of your home. To transform a disorderly area into an orderly one, you will want to first clean up the area of all loose paper and put it away in a designated place or just throw it away. You can use baskets, drawers or shelving space to store away your paper. Once you have a designated place established, it is easier then to remain organized.

Think now about how your paper became so messy in the first place. What did you do with it once it arrived? Did you put the full bundle into a basket, for example? If you glanced at it and then put it down in a haphazard pile at the nearest table or desk near you, chances are that is your problem. Your goal is to designate a said place for every item of value in your entire home. That way you are organized.

The organized way to deal with all paper that crosses your hands and/or desk is to:

1. Have it placed at a designated tray, basket, shelf or drawer.

2. Spend the time you need to look into what the paper commands of you and, when done with it;
3. Place it in either a file, put it in a filing basket to be filed, put it in an out basket, or simply throw it away.

This type of paper flow system will organize you in a heartbeat and will prevent finding assorted pieces of paper everywhere throughout your home. As soon as you receive the paper, you put it in its allotted place. From this, you will create a peaceful work area. You will automatically know where to go to get your paper and where to find paper that you need.

The same system can be applied to reorganizing a disordered environment. You can tackle a room, a closet, or a drawer by first organizing it and then taking a look at how it got that way in the first place. Here is where the new system comes into play. You need to be able to maintain the order you have applied to it for later so that the same mess does not just develop all over again.

The more time and effort you put into being organized, the less time you will need to apply to organizing later

You will need to acquire the necessary "tools" needed to create good order.

Having good order is the building block to being better organized.

Shop the discount and specialty stores for great tools to organize. They are inexpensive and work well. If you find your bedroom is hard to keep organized then look around for something to solve your problem. The moment you find the right tool, you can begin to put things into their proper place.

There is no easy way around trying to get your life in order and be better organized. It takes time and effort on your part. The more tools you can apply to your disorganized messes, the easier it will be to maintain order. Once you find the right approach, it will be easy to keep the same momentum going.

Use a system to organize every area of your life. Go from room to room in your home and apply tools to simplify messy problems. You will be so glad you did!

An Orderly Life

There are generally two different types of people who exist in the work place; they are The Organized and The Disorganized. What characteristics set them apart and which do you aspire to be?

There seems to be lack of discipline with The Disorganized. Others around them might think The Disorganized are actually not even aware of the condition they are in, because it is a situation that appears to persist over long periods. Sometimes it can be a never-changing view of that person's surroundings. It is common to conclude that this type of person is often stressed and must go in all directions to get things done, if they can get things done at all.

The Organized, on the other hand, are a unique breed. They seem to be able to create handy places for things. They see to it that “everything has a place and that there's a place for everything.” They are the ones you would call on first when you need help to get something important done. They can generally get more done in a relatively short period. They have a real knack for tackling work with a disciplined approach.

Now which would you rather be?

Getting proper instruction and a sense of guidance, the Disorganized can turn around on a dime and become organized. It is often just a matter of providing them with the expertise and then working with them on the discipline it takes to move into the ranks of The Organized.

The annoyances and inconveniences of working around The Disorganized eventually takes its toll on those who know them best. If you work with The Disorganized, you tend to be annoyed by them easily. Often times, a situation creates itself so that others must work harder or bypass the individual to get certain things done. Does this scenario sound all too familiar? This hardship on others can bring about resentment and unnecessary hurt feelings.

The Disorganized are basically enemies to themselves, more than anything, so it is important to change adverse conditions in order to survive in harmony in the work place. Rather than picking up the slack, offer some guidance and direction. This will bring harmony to the relationship.

One of the challenges of The Organized is how to bring harmony between the two conflicting types. To start with, find a way to peacefully get The Disorganized to change their ways. Do this and you will teach The Disorganized to foster new and better habits in all that they do. It can be done if done carefully.

Order to The Organized, is a critical factor for optimum change. Their choice of method is to figure out ways to be more efficient. They want everyone around them to figure out how to accomplish more with the least amount of effort and/or energy. They think always in systematic terms as a way of handling work. They thrive on having everything done in an orderly fashion.

To be or not to be organized---that is the question

The Disorganized should answer that question for him or herself and then act upon it. If they do nothing else, they can ask questions. They can observe and follow the lead. The minute The Disorganized becomes organized, the minute they have more time for themselves. This in itself should be good enough incentive.

Next comes the healing of relationships, where everyone works together in one accord, so in harmony. This is worth striving for. If The Disorganized is serious about changing their ways, they will move on from an attitude of new awareness into a new attitude of action!

Let Good Order Reign!

Even the most organized person can struggle with being orderly. In fact, it is often the most organized who have the most difficulty keeping on top of organization.

What makes the Difference?

As your workload continues to increase, your environment can suffer unless you take some time to take care of administrative and organizational tasks. It does not take long for every day mail to pile up if it is not being put away in its place as you finish with it. That "place" might be a temporary home, but at least the letters are put away instead of sitting out on the desk somewhere.

Remember that whatever is not put in its place will only pile to make clutter.

Because your busy lifestyle warrants continuous maintenance to keep an orderly environment, a key to being clutter-free is to put things away when you are done with them. It really only takes a moment but, if you do not, it can take hours to sort out when it gets out of control.

Remember that time is money.

Your new behavior usually has to be developed, like a routine. Developing a good routine takes time. The act of putting something away right away may sound easy for some, yet, on the other hand, is not part of some individual's basic nature. We are often too busy to be bothered with doing that, right? On the other hand, maybe you just haven't designated

a "home" for the item yet, yes? Whatever your attitude is, the best thing you can do for yourself now is change it (the attitude.)

If you were to look around your home right now, it would be a good "drill" to spot what does not have a place.

A new home for magazines could be a magazine basket or holder. For audio and videotapes, a home could be special holders, containers, or even a drawer, or designated shelf. Mail should have a basket to go into. Projects or papers could go in folders. Folders could go in a folder rack, holder, basket, or filing cabinet. It just makes good sense, otherwise, all your items will only lie around and collect dust and this is the first step to amassing clutter. Office supplies can go in a cabinet, a drawer, or containers. Items such as keys and glasses can be placed on hooks or in a designated dish. Now you get the idea!

Once everything has been assigned a place or go to temporarily, the area will be tidy and organized. Suddenly you will think and breathe freely and you will have an increased sense of well being.

It is a good habit to work on just one project at a time and, before moving on to the next activity, put it away.

If you want to be clutter-free, have all of your projects in order. As you finish one, put it away before you begin on the next. This way your work area will remain free, clear, and tidy. You will be able to apply yourself best to your projects in this way. You are developing good habits and you will be more creative. To end your work day, clear off your desk. This will make way for more work to come later. There is nothing more tiring than having to clear the way from the day before when you want to start anew.

There is simplicity in order and organization

First, you decide to change the environment to a better one. Then, you change an attitude. After that, adjust your habits, establish and implement your systems, and lastly, adapt policy to maintain the order put there. It all comes together very nicely.

Getting Rid of "Stuff"

"For the most part, we, who could choose simplicity, choose complication."

~Anne Morrow Lindbergh, in Gift from the Sea

Perhaps you feel that anything that can be hidden away will not be seen, right? This must mean what is hidden away is not in the way.

Where do you we choose to stash away our forgotten items? Usually it is in the patio, basement or garage. Sight unseen, so this must mean we do not need to bother with such items. The bottom line is, all we are really accomplishing is nothing, basically.

The major purpose of being organized is to have a place for everything.

Where do we need to start? We need to go through the decision-making process. We must learn to responsibly let go.

1. If it is an empty jar you need, save a few in your cabinet and recycle the rest.
2. If it is not working and you do not wish to repair it, toss it. You can buy a new one that works.
3. If you have not worn a clothing or jewelry item since last season, give it to charity.

These are some simpler examples that you can use. You can add to them, of course.

You will gain instant respect by cleaning up your space. By waiting, matters will only worsen. Things do not stay the same and, because we are in a constant condition of change, we will eventually be faced with a total mess if we do not deal with it.

The best part of being organized is the amount of new space created.

Anyone can afford even small bursts of time to get better organized. The more time you give yourself the more you will get done.

A few reasons to get organized

1. You are ready to make a move.
2. You need to rent a room or extra storage facility just to accommodate your things.
3. Your closet is full, but you still find there's nothing in it to wear.
4. You want to earn a wad of cash holding a garage sale.
5. You become aware that someone else will end up having to go through your stuff after you are gone.

For some, getting rid of stuff is easy enough. For others, it can be a real emotional undertaking. Memories are usually attached to everything we own and, because of this, can be difficult to let go. However, with a motivated, enthusiastic approach, the task is like wiping down that kitchen fridge so it sparkles back at you. It just makes you feel good.

The Art of Organization

You too can be organized

You like the way your home looks. The furniture that you saved years for sits proudly. Everything is situated just right, yet it's cluttered with paper, items belonging to other parts of the house, too much brick-a-brack, and trash particles that didn't somehow make it to the waste basket.

Take heart! There is a definite art to approaching the task of getting organized. First, let us take a look at why you should do it and what the clutter about you actually does to your decorating scheme.

You have already learned that clutter interferes with your sense of tranquility and energy flow in your home. Objects actually have a frequency of energy, and clutter will interfere with the smooth flow of energy in any surrounding space. This contributes to lethargy and procrastination. You feel weighed down.

Clutter also makes a space seem smaller and diminishes light. This can make you, your family and friends seem depressed.

If you experience stuffy nose, sneezing and coughing in your home, chances are you are breathing in a lot of accumulated dust. This just comes along with the unwanted clutter. Your health will suffer because of the clutter.

Another problem clutter will cause is that it makes a person feel overwhelmed. With so much disorder and unnecessary items about, you will find it is difficult to be focused. Therefore, along with your energy, your spirit seems to sag. This is not a pretty picture!

These dilemmas are all good indications that it is time to dig in. These are good reasons to put your house in order and get your space organized.

A room that has good order to it is a happy place to live and enjoy. It smiles back at you. You have a place of tranquility and a means from which to focus. When your home is minus the clutter, you have the energy flow you desire. You feel that you have more vim and vinegar.

We should all take pride in our home. Our home should be our refuge away from the storms in life. Our home should be our castle. We should love to be in our home and we should want to entertain often.

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