

## *Organize Smart!* *How to Get Going Without Getting Overwhelmed*

Any time of year is good to take stock of our busy lives and consider projects and goals we hope to accomplish. Most of us have competing demands for our time, and find it difficult to achieve a balance between the joys of life and the “noise” of life. Wouldn’t it feel great to take care of the tasks of the day and still have time to do what you love? Becoming more organized in our day-to-day life is a way to achieve this result. By employing systems to reduce clutter, process paper and create functional spaces, we save time, reduce stress and have more energy to focus on the pleasures around us.

First, plan your space to be organized for how you use it. Write down what functions you want the space to support, to reflect how you live your life now. Consider all the activities that currently go on in that space, and look for obvious conflicts to what you want. Take note of items that don’t support your current needs. Take the time to assess each space based on who uses the space and each person’s needs.

### ***Set up a Plan for Your Space***

- Plan each area to be organized for how you use it.
- Write down what functions you want the space to support, to reflect how you live your life now.
- Consider all the activities that you do in each space, and look for obvious conflicts to what you want. Is too much going on? Simplify you plan based on your goals.
- Take note of items that don’t support your current needs.
- Assess each space based on who uses the space and each person’s needs.

### ***Take Action on One Area at a Time***

- Schedule time on your calendar to organize and honor it.
- Start with a 15-minute block of time, and add more as time and attention permits.
- Pick a time when you have the most energy and are least likely to be distracted (i.e., no phone calls).
- Start with a small task such as weeding out mail, sorting a desk drawer, or organizing one kitchen shelf or bookshelf.
- Stay put while you work, to avoid “zig-zag” organizing. This is the least productive way to work and wastes time. Staying in one room keeps you focused and you get more done.
- Enlist help. Friends, family or a helpful professional can offer encouragement, motivation and an extra pair of hands to speed tasks along.

### ***Sort Everything by Category***

- As you sort, keep like items together.
- Use separate containers for items that go in another room, can be donated, or discarded.

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REDISCOVER YOUR SPACE!

- Weed and purge items as you sort, and be ruthless, especially if you have limited storage.
- Keep only what supports your goals for the space, such as items that directly relate to a planned use.
- Remove items for donation or trash as soon as possible, to realize your “found” space.

## ***Store at Your Point of Use***

- Store items at or near where you will use them. By doing this, you create a dedicated “home” for things. This ensures that you will always know where to find something when you need it, makes it easy to maintain the space, and aids in the success of the organizing system.
- Communicate the system to other users so that everyone is accountable to it.
- If you buy in bulk and need to store excess supply in another space, make note of where to find the surplus when you need it, to reduce duplicate purchases.
- Consider buying in bulk only if you have ample storage space to accommodate the excess.
- If you are space-constrained, evaluate the trade-offs of having more items than you have space for. Keep in mind your goals for the space.

## ***Making Decisions about Our Things***

Available storage or display space in our homes or offices is commonly limited, and making decisions about what to keep (vs. what to display) is often the hardest part of any organizing project.

At first glance, we favor and value every item equally. If you find yourself having a hard time letting go of things, see what happens when you ask yourself these questions the next time you tackle a tough pile:

- When did I use that last?
- Do I like it?
- Why am I keeping this?
- How do I feel about this?

It’s important to answer yourself honestly. Any gut feelings of dislike, guilt or remorse that are triggered as you review your possessions are generally an indication that you are keeping items for reasons that undermine your true objectives. When we keep the bigger goal in mind, such as creating space for your life now, we allow ourselves to make true and positive choices about the things we own.

As you answer these questions about your things, the decisions you arrive at will feel empowering, as you experience the true benefit of choice. You will be able to distinguish between those items that give you great pleasure (high value) and those that do not.

*If you would like to discuss specific organizing challenges and strategies and need help getting started, contact Clearing House to schedule an organizing session. We will help you design and implement a system that meets individual needs.*