

TIDY

Real Estate



TidyRealEstate.com

Tidy Tip-Pack

33 Simple Ways to Organize Your Life

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HABITS & PLANNING

Organizational Habits

Whether it's washing the dishes right after a meal or filing every day, being organized has a lot to do with habit. It's just as easy to be in the habit of washing dishes right after a meal as **not** washing dishes right after a meal. Watch a highly organized person and you'll notice that they take out the garbage now (instead of "later") because they know that this undesirable task is never going to become any more desirable.



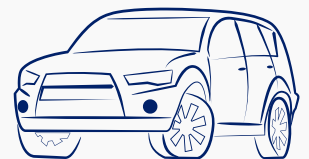
Shopping List



The old adage "Don't go to the grocery store hungry" rings true. When you go to the grocery store or Costco, go on a full stomach and bring a list (divided by type: produce, grains, dairy, cleaning supplies, etc.). You'll save money buying only the things on your list. You'll save time avoiding aisles that don't contain any items on your list. In the good old days, we kept lists on the fridge and added things when we ran out. Better yet, now we keep a running list on your phone (which you always have with you) so you can shop smart at the store.

Errands Map

Create an "Errands Map" which is a physical map of your area that plots all the points that you regularly visit (post office, grocery, etc). When you are in a certain area of town, a quick look at your map will remind you what else you can take care of while you're there. Your efficiency will save you time and gas!



Master Project List

Your Master Project List serves as the repository for **ALL** the organizing, household, and other projects you need (or would like) to do. It helps you prioritize what REALLY needs to be done (1st priority), what you'd like to get to sometime in the next couple months (2nd Priority), and what you would like to do in a perfect world of endless time ("Someday/Maybe projects"). Writing down your Master Project List helps you recognize the sheer volume of projects you have floating around in your head, and helps you prioritize and edit out some projects as needed. Just as your physical stuff needs to have a home, your projects also need to have a home on a list or they will continue to run laps in your mind!



Note: The **project** is the outcome you want to achieve. The **next action** is the immediate task you need to accomplish to move that project forward. Attaching "next actions" to each of the projects on your master project list helps you to "move the ball forward" on multiple projects at the same time.

Next Action List



While your "Master Project List" contains all your high-level "outcomes" you'd like to accomplish within a certain time period, your "Next Action" list contains the more immediate tasks or "next actions" related to those projects. Productivity guru David Allen, teaches that for every project you have, you'll want to identify an immediate "next action".

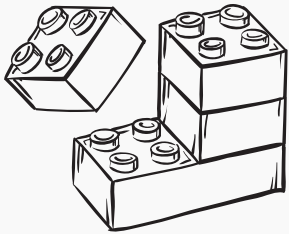
For example, if your project is "Host Thanksgiving," your next action may be, "text family/friends a save-the-date-invitation" and another may be "call rental company to place table rental order".

Same Time Everyday

If you have decided you want to get organized but are very busy and do not have large blocks of time to devote to your organizational projects, commit to doing a certain amount (even 5 minutes) each day. It is best to do the work at the same time each day so you create a habit. Treat your organizational time as an appointment like any other. Put it on your calendar. For fun, consider making the appointment at an odd time, like 6:17 a.m. or 7:34 p.m., whatever it takes to get you to do it. Set your watch, cell phone, or an Alexa alarm to notify you that it's organization time. You may even find that once you get going on a project, you spend more than your allotted time. BONUS!



Personal Responsibility

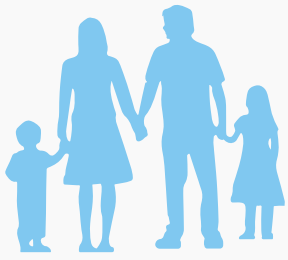


Did you know that it is NOT your job to clean up your children's toys? It's true! Teaching your children to put their toys and clean clothes away, bring over their dishes, and keep their rooms and bathrooms tidy **will not only make your life easier**, it will help them to be more responsible. These good habits will make them much better roommates and spouses when they get older. If you've been accustomed to doing the majority of these things in the past, consider implementing some changes today. The lessons of personal responsibility will serve your children (and all those they live and work with in the future) well.

Do it Now, Not Tomorrow

Today is yesterday's "tomorrow." This year is last year's "next year." We put off something until "tomorrow" because we don't feel like doing it today. Will we feel like doing it tomorrow? Probably not. Will the undesirable task be any more desirable in the future? Probably not. **Do it today.** Whatever "it" is, make an effort to do it today. Tomorrow will bring its own list of "To-Dos".





Consider Your Loved Ones

At some point, your loved ones will be responsible for going through your house and possessions. You are giving them a gift by having your "house in order," both financially and physically. Whatever downsizing and organizing you do now will make their lives easier during the sorrowful time after you pass on.

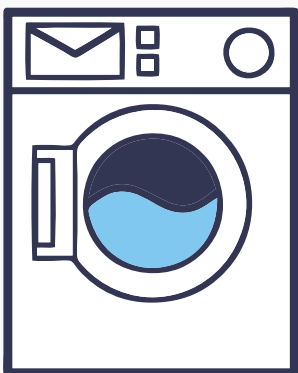
HOUSEHOLD

Dish Duty

There is nothing worse than waking up to a sink filled with dishes. Do your dishes right after you enjoy your meal. If you can wash the cookware as you go along while preparing the meal, even better. If you have washed all the pots and pans and put them on the drying rack to dry, take the extra 2-5 minutes to dry the dishes and put them away. If the dishwasher is full, run it. Your kitchen is cleared and ready for the next cooking project. That quick "reset" makes all the difference!



Fold As You Go



The mound of clean clothes on your bed or on your family room floor got you down? Take five minutes to fold and put away clean clothes when they come out of the dryer. Not only will your clothes be less wrinkled, laundry will be less of a chore as you'll be processing it as you go along. Have others at home with you? Enlist their help in the folding! This is a great way for kids (even little ones) to participate in household maintenance.

PRO TIP: If you're doing a number of loads in a row, fold as you go, but hold off on putting the clothes away until you've completed your laundry marathon. That way, you'll only be putting clothes away one time instead of multiple.

Activate Your Workforce!

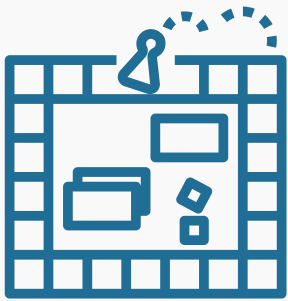
Unless you are the only person living in your home, the job of “organizing” does not fall on you alone. Every single member of the household (all those who can walk anyway) is responsible for some portion of the organization and chore work in your home. Even the little ones can have age-appropriate assignments. This gets them into the habits of an organized lifestyle. Many hands make light work!



Make it a Group Effort

For couples or families, it’s much more fun to do your weekly chores if you make it a group effort. Set aside a specific time each week, crank the music, get after it, then reward yourselves with a great dinner or outdoor outing, a movie or just some family time playing board games. When you know there’s a light at the end of the chore tunnel, there’s more joy in the task itself.

PRO TIP: Do a “nightly sweep”. Set a 10 or 15-minute timer where you (and the rest of the family) tidy up so everything that was used that day gets returned to its designated home. If you watch TV as a family, you can also make use of commercials as a time that everyone does some quick tidying as well.



Chore Chart

Whether you live on your own or you have a large family, a chore chart maps out all the tasks needed to maintain the house and indicates who is responsible for each task each week. Living in community, whether in a family or among roommates, requires that each person do his or her part. The chore chart is a very matter-of-fact way to outline who is responsible for what each week.



CLUTTER

A Place For Everything

“A place for everything, and everything in its place.” This is the organized person’s mantra. Clutter happens when there is no specified place for things. As a result, clutter ends up accumulating in every nook and cranny, on every countertop, in every cupboard and drawer (read: “junk drawer”). The sum total is a sense of us wading through an overloaded sea of “things” that we end up despising instead of appreciating. Designate a “home” for everything in your home!

PRO TIP: If you’re buying something new, designate a home for it in advance! If there’s no room for it, maybe you don’t need to buy it or you need to get rid of something to make room for it!



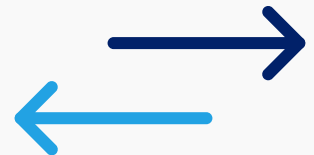
Avoid Clutter-Makers



Clutter-makers are those “unplanned for” purchases that produce clutter. We never intended to buy them. We ran into them in a store or on the Internet one day and were intrigued by them. “This will make my life easier, better, happier...etc.,” we thought to ourselves. These clutter-makers were not “on our list.” We may not have even been aware of their existence before we walked into the store or visited that site.

One In, One Out

Another favorite mantra of the organized person is “one in, one out.” If something comes into your house, whether it’s a pencil or a bedroom set, something **MUST** go out. This is a basic principle which forces you to consider what will “go” when you’re purchasing a “clutter-maker” (or, indeed, any item).



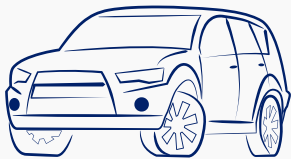
Avoid Clutter-Sellers

Clutter-sellers are particular stores that are loaded with clutter-makers, items you never intended on buying and items that in many cases, will not necessarily be used to the fullest (because you didn't "need" them in the first place!). These include Dollar Stores, Wal-Mart, Target, Costco, and the Home Shopping Network. While it's not practical or necessary to avoid these sellers altogether, resolve to visit them with a list and stick to your list! Remember...stores have "sales" to SELL you things...things that will need a place and a use in your home!



The Three Magic Questions

When considering a purchase, whether it's a car or a candy bar, ask yourself these three questions:



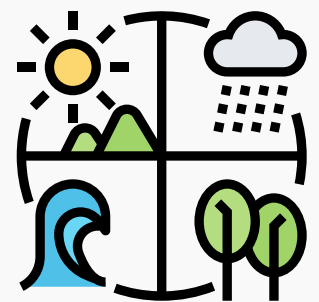
1. Where will this "live" in my home/office?
2. When will I use this in the immediate or near future (be specific)?
3. Can I afford this?

If you can't provide SPECIFIC answers to questions #1 and #2, and a strong "YES" to question #3, don't buy it.

Make Use of the Seasons

The change of season provides us with a great opportunity to purge and declutter. Mark your calendars for the change of each season over the next year. Take the opportunity to look through your clothes and seasonal decorations from the season that just passed. Are there items that can be passed along or discarded completely?

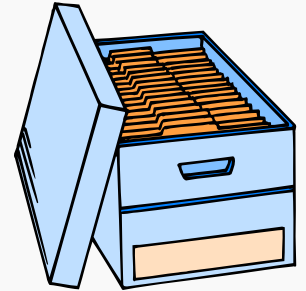
Move 'em on out! It doesn't make sense to keep and pack away items that you won't enjoy or use next year!



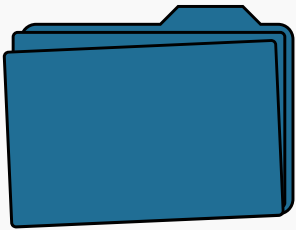
PAPER

File Purging

Files, whether in our file cabinet or on our computers, expand because we do not purge them. Talk to your lawyer and/or accountant regarding what documents to keep and how long to keep them. Shred the rest! You can decide to purge once a season or once a year. Set up a regular purging schedule, put it in your calendar and stick to it. By purging often, you'll know what you actually have on file and you'll avoid having to buy another file cabinet or file box (which saves you both space and money).



File Every Day



There's nothing worse than facing a pile of "To-Be-Filed" papers that has been growing over the last 6 months. File every day. If you file every day, it takes 1 to 2 minutes. If you don't, it becomes a daunting task which you'll continue to avoid (and it then becomes even more daunting!).

Beware of "Pile-itis"

As humans, we tend to maintain piles: To-Do piles, To-Read piles, To-Shred piles, To-Fold piles etc. The problem with piles is that the timeliest item (i.e. the bill due this week) ends up on the bottom of the pile. By the time we actually face the pile, we've already gotten dinged with a late fee.

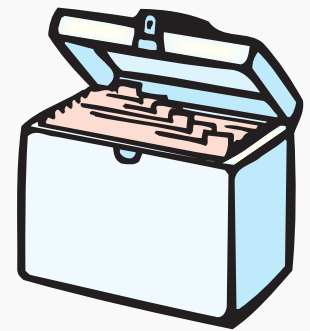
PRO TIP: There are some people who actually really like piles and aren't bothered by them visually. If that's you, keep the piles but have a set day/time each week when you "process" the time-sensitive, action-required piles.



Create an Action Station

An action station is a portable open box which contains hanging file folders. The hanging file folders are action-based (i.e. "To-Read," "To-Pay," etc.). When mail or other action items come into your life, if you don't have time to address them immediately, you can place them in action station to be addressed on a set day in the near future. This box is portable so it can move as needed from the home office to the kitchen to in front of the TV or wherever you choose to take care of those action items.

PRO TIP: Put in your calendar a specific time to address these action items...and stick with it! If doing this daily feels like too much, set aside a weekly day/time.



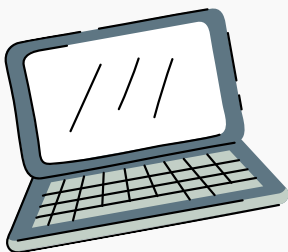
FINANCES

Auto Pay

Put all your bills on auto-pay. Most businesses allow you to sign up for "auto-pay," which means each month your due payment is automatically deducted from the checking or credit card account you designate. No chance of late fees and you never have to wonder, "Did I pay that bill?" The amount of time, stress, and mental clutter that is saved by using auto-pay is MASSIVE! Just do it!



Electronic Statements



In addition to auto-pay, request to receive all your bills and statements (bank, credit card, loan, retirement) electronically. This will dramatically reduce the amount of paper you have to maintain while simultaneously decreasing your "to be filed" pile. If want to have all your digital statements saved in one place to avoid having to log into each different site and save them yourself, consider using FileThis which synchs up with all your accounts to save each new statement to a cloud file as it comes in.

Personal Accounting Apps

Personal accounting apps (Quicken, Mint, YNAB) are excellent for tracking balances, budgeting, and categorizing your spending so you have an accurate picture of your current financial situation. You can set them up to automatically download account information from your bank, credit card, retirement, and brokerage accounts, so all the latest financial info can be accessed in one place. Schedule a time each month to review and categorize your expenses so when tax time comes, you'll have all the info you need at your fingertips!



MINDFULNESS

Honesty and Gentleness

Be honest with yourself about what needs to be done and what actually can be done. Most importantly, be gentle with yourself. So maybe you are not as organized as you'd like to be...berating yourself about it is not going to get you organized, nor is it going to motivate you to start an organizing project.



Patience



Be patient with yourself...Rome was, indeed, not built in a day...your "organized life" will take some time to create as well. It may take days, weeks, months, or possibly longer to complete the organizational projects you have in mind. That's okay. Even if you set aside 5 minutes a day, that's 35 minutes a week, 2 ½ hours a month, and 30 hours a year devoted to your organizational pursuits. Don't underestimate what can be achieved in the daily 5 minutes.

Know Thyself

If organization is not something that comes naturally to you, recruit the help of someone who is organized (either a professional organizer or a really organized friend or family member). If the thought of organizing overwhelms you, a “partner in crime” may be just what the doctor ordered to get you started on the project and to see it through to completion.



Capitalize on Strengths



Do you love folding laundry but hate emptying the dishwasher? Does your spouse like vacuuming but detests cleaning out the refrigerator? When dividing up your household chores, keep in mind a person’s strengths and preferences. This makes the chore list less of a...“chore” for each person involved.

THE SECRET TO AN "ORGANIZED LIFE"

Here it is...There is truly no such thing as being **TOTALLY** “organized.” The day you feel you have finally completed all your organization projects, you receive bills in the mail, texts and emails to answer, phone calls to return. There are chores to do and friends and family members who need your attention. Your “to-do list” will always have something on it...that is the nature of life. It’s important to see organization as a journey and not a destination, or better yet, as a lifestyle.

The Secrets of an "Organized Person"

- The “organized person” knows organization is a fluid thing and that some weeks you may accomplish more than others.
- The “organized person” is not overwhelmed by their project and action lists as they’ve put systems in place to tackle all the things they need to accomplish.
- They know that sometimes things fall through the cracks but that ultimately everything will get done.
- They’re not afraid to recruit help if they become overwhelmed.
- They prize order and they have developed the habits that make order easy to maintain.
- They know that being “organized” makes them more efficient and gives them more time to do the things they love and more time to spend with the people they love.