

# HOW TO BE **ORGANIZED**



**AMANDA WELLS**



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## WHY GET ORGANIZED?

If you are like most people today, you feel that you have too little time and too much to do. As a result, you often end up not getting the things done that are needed to be done. And even little things grow into a mountain of work that you feel you can never climb.

I used to be very unorganized. On all of my report cards that I received as a kid, the teacher always made that cute little comment “needs to get organized.” I had a desk that was a mess at school and a room that was a mess at home. One day, the teacher dumped out everything in my desk on the floor in front of the class and told me to pick it up. I can still feel the sting of that humiliation.

My mother was not as cruel. She would clean my room so that the Board of Health didn’t come in and condemn our house. Both of these people tried to help me get organized, but neither one of them really helped me at all. My teacher used drastic and humiliating tactics that didn’t work but just made me upset, and my mother did the work for me instead of making me do it myself. It wasn’t until I was an adult that I realized how to get organized, why it was so important and how to teach my own children how they could stay organized as well.



The purpose of this book is not just to tell you how to clean your home or desk so that everything is where you can find it, but also how to organize your life so that it is easy to manage and you do not feel overwhelmed. Although I eventually realized that it was much easier to have my important papers at a place that I could find them and the value of having a home that didn't look like a pigsty, my mind was unorganized throughout much of my life. My kids were forever joining activities and I was forever driving them around to different events after school while trying to maintain a job as well as my home. I often felt like a hamster on a wheel. It wasn't until much later when I learned not only how to organize my home and work place, but also my mind.

This book will teach you how to organize every aspect of your life - from your home, your work and even your life. It will also teach you some valuable tips and teaching secrets that you can pass on to your children so that they can learn the value of organization as well. You will learn valuable lessons on organization that you can use to keep your life in order and avoid feeling overwhelmed all of the time as well as read some anecdotes that perhaps you can relate to.

It will also teach you how you can stay organized even when things occur that throw you off your routine. We are not robots, we're humans. And as everyone knows, we have things that come up that are unpredictable that can throw us off our kilter. You want to be organized, but you do not want to be so rigid in that you cannot handle a break in the routine without, as the kids nowadays say "tweaking out."

Organization is essential for you to live a healthier life in both mind and body. When you feel as though you are well organized, you also feel as though you have more control in your every day life. It makes those around you more comfortable and also lends to harmony in the family. Why get a little organization in your life? The answer is simple - to retain your sanity, make you more efficient and to also give some sort of structure to your life and those around you.

No matter how unorganized you are, you can become the epitome of organization by taking the tips from this book. The first step is to



realize that you did not get overwhelmed at once, it took months, years or even a lifetime for you to get to the state you are in now. However, even if your house is a total wreck, your kids are sapping all of your energy, your dog is constantly having accidents in the house and your work life is a mess because you keep skipping from one project to another, you can get it all back on track. It is important to know the first step in the process is to take it one small step at a time.

Trying to get organized can be daunting if you look at the entire picture. Therefore, you have to remember the old adage that my father always uses when it comes to getting organized: “How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.”

So sit back and enjoy reading this book. Remember that you have to take your organization skills “one bite at a time” and start with small goals that will eventually lead up to the big goal, which is having organization in your life, work and home. Trust me, if I can do this, so can you.





## HOW TO GET RID OF CLUTTER

**T**here are good ways to get rid of clutter and bad ways. The bad way is the route you usually take when you get disgusted with the fact that you have too many things all over the place and decide to get rid of everything. I know this because during a time when I was in the mindset to get rid of all the “clutter” part of it turned out to be my high school yearbook and my mother’s wedding dress that I was holding. Things that cannot be replaced and are gone forever. But such was my zeal to get rid of clutter that I discarded these items without realizing what I was doing. Like every-thing else, clutter has to be evaluated before you get rid of it. And you should also make sure to bear in mind things that other people can use, even if you no longer want them.

Another example of how I got rid of clutter was when I moved from my home to a smaller apartment and had a ton of kids toys that my kids no longer used. I ended up with a heap of toys in my driveway ready for the garbage truck. These could have been donated to a number of different charities, but I was so overwhelmed that I just wanted them gone. The good news about this is that my neighbours had a field day picking through the garbage and getting them-selves some free goods. It was particularly gratifying to see those who



did not want to attend my estate sale in that upscale neighbourhood because they did not want to be seen buying used goods actually climbing the trash heap to get what I now considered to be trash. But that is not the point - the point is that the toys should have been donated and could have been had I been a bit more organized when getting rid of clutter.

The good way to get rid of clutter is the way that I now use. I go through my home periodically and get rid of clutter in the places that is most likely collects like the closets. Those coats and other garments that I have not worn for the past year get tossed into a bag for the many organizations that come around to take these items for chari-table causes.

Some things, however, are not meant for charity as they are too worn , stained or have something broken, like a zipper. What I do when I want to get rid of clutter is to have two bags, one for items that are to be donated and the other for items that belong in the garbage.

Clutter can consist of many different things in your home that you have no use for and you have been accumulating for long time. I used to deal in collectibles and went to many homes where clutter was amok. I've seen people who have had basements filled with old magazines and newspapers. Homes where you had to walk a narrow path to get through the house in order to get from one room to the next. This is the result of clutter piling up to the point where it got overwhelming for the person.

There are two reasons why people tend to collect a lot of clutter. One reason is that they feel that they have something of value and continue to hang onto items that, in reality, usually have very little or no value. These types of people are those who are afraid to throw anything out less they find that they need it later. Many people have a compulsive disorder to keep everything that they receive, including junk mail, newspapers and other items that people normally throw out, just in case they may want to look at them anyway. Some people just like to hold onto junk. I have a neighbour who is like this and who routinely takes anything out of the trash that I put in. Needless to say, his house is a maze of clut-



ter. And to make matters worse, it is a maze of much of my old clutter.

The other reason people keep clutter is because they are too over-whelmed to know where to begin when it comes to getting rid of the clutter. Cleaning out an overstuffed closet seems to be a monumental task that they cannot bear to undertake. So the clutter builds and builds. Until they get to the point where they decide to chuck it all and end up getting rid of their yearbook and mother's wedding dress. Most people fall into the latter category.

The easiest way to get rid of clutter in your home is to decide what you want to keep and why. Obviously, things that have senti-mental value or those that are collectible are kept. Clothes that you wear are kept. Other things, however, such as the kids toys that they no longer play with because they're now teenagers, clothes that you haven't worn in years and cannot wear even if you wanted to as well as knick knacks, old videos, music and books can be given to many different charities.

Electronic equipment also falls into this category. Do you really need that analog TV sitting on the floor of your bedroom when you just bought yourself a flat screen? Many charities will not take elec-tronics, so it is best to advertise them for free on a site like Craig's List or just to give them to a neighbour or friend who can use it. I give all of my old electronic equipment to my neighbour and save him the trouble of having to go to the trash to get it. I have cut out the middleman with the trash when it comes to this person and now just bring it right to the source. If you know someone who collects all types of junk, you can make their day by giving them stuff you no longer want and save yourself the trouble of having to advertise to get rid of it.

Take your time when you are getting rid of clutter. If it seems daunting, give yourself an hour to work on the project and then stop until the next day. Even if you spend a half an hour a day working on what to keep and what to give away or toss, you will start making headway. You do not have to feel as though you need to get rid of clutter all in one day.



In our house, books and magazines comprise a great deal of clutter. Once every month, therefore, I go through the books that are keepers and those that I will never read again and send them to the Goodwill. We have four subscriptions to magazines that no one ever seems to read that I bring to the doctor's office after removing the address and name label. Newspapers get bundled up and recycled.

Once a year I go through movies and music that we have hanging about and also donate these items to charity. We are a family that reads quite a bit, listens to music and also accumulates many movies over the course of a year. While some of these items we keep for future use, others are given to charity.

People with little children have to be especially vigilant when it comes to toys, stuffed animals and clothes as children outgrow these quickly. Instead of letting all of these items pile up and clutter up closets and playrooms, it is much better to give those that are in good shape to organizations that can sell them for a low price to people who will be grateful to have them. This is a good way for you to teach your children a little bit about compassion and how to not want to hoard everything that they receive. Of course, there are some things that are sentimental to your children that they will not want to get rid of and those should be kept. For example, my daughter, who is now nineteen, still has the Barney doll that she had when she was a year old. Sure, it's tucked into the corner of her closet in a box so none of her friends can see it, but it's there and she's not parting with it. It holds sentimental value.

To put it simple, clutter is stuff that makes your house look like a mess and consists of items that you do not need and may have accumulated over the years. When you are ready to let go, make sure that you give them to someone who may be able to use them. The items that you keep should be stored in a place where they are unobtrusive and do not make the house look cluttered. You can look for traditional storage for these items or get creative. My home is tiny now, but I still have retained all of the things that I feel I cannot part with. I purchased cheap display cases for my doll collection. I cleared a shelf on the top of one of my closets for books as I do not have the room for



bookshelves. I use a cedar chest that doubles as a coffee table to store our photographs. If you walked into my home, you would not see clutter, even if you opened the closets.

Once you get rid of the clutter and have, as they used to say “a place for everything and everything in its place,” you will not only find it easier to clean your home, but you will feel more organized. You will know where to find things when you need them and not have to worry about inadvertently throwing something out by mistake, like your high school yearbook.





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## CLEANING OUT YOUR CLOSETS

**W**e already talked in the last chapter a bit about cleaning out your closets. The two bag method is a good way to get rid of things that can be donated and those things that need to be tossed out. I have found that the same rules apply when you are getting rid of things in other closets, like utility closets or coat closets.

The best way to clean out your closets for organization is to make sure that you are using all of the space in your closet. If you have a basement, you can put up shelves and use containers for storage. If you have a small home, however, like mine, you may not have a lot of closet space and have to trim down what you decide to keep.

There are closet organizers that can help you keep your closets not only more organized, but also give you more use of the space. When you look at the inside of an empty closet, you see that there is a lot more space than a traditional closet allots for. The shelves at the top, for example, are often used to toss up different items like sweaters and shirts. The poles hang clothes. Closet organizers can make more use of this space by installing shelves and even baskets in your closets so that they look neater. However you still have to clean out these spaces on a periodic basis otherwise you will find that the



closet is filled with clutter, no matter how you hide it in drawers and baskets.

Cleaning out a traditional closet should take you two hours, tops. I have found that the easiest way to do this is to toss everything out of the closet and put it on the bed. Make sure that the closet is completely empty. Then start going through the items that you want and those that you no longer use. If you have clothes that you have not worn for two years, guess what? You're probably not going to wear them again. The exception would be evening clothes that are still in style, still fit you and you might be able to wear again if you are invited to a wedding or a fancy occasion. Sentimental items should also be kept as always.

Get rid of shoes that you no longer wear, have holes in them or are missing a mate. Once you are finished with your clothes and have sorted out what you want and what you want to get rid of, use the two bag method to separate the good from the trash and then dispose of them accordingly.

You can do the same thing with any closet in your home. Once you have cleared out the mess, you can then put the items that you are keeping back in your closet. In my home, I do this twice a year, usually when the weather changes.

There are containers that you can use to store seasonal items if you live in a four season climate. Unfortunately, I do not have any room to store these containers, so I make do by separating the current season with the out of season clothes so that they are easier to find. I also do not believe in storing things under the bed, although there are some storage items that you can use to do this if you are so inclined. The important thing when you are cleaning out closets is to get rid of the stuff that you are no longer using and do not plan to use again.

The same goes for the utility closet. Go through it once in a while and get rid of things that you no longer need. I kept paint cans in my closet for two years thinking that I was going to again attempt interior painting, despite the train wreck it caused the first time. I finally figured out that it would be best to have a professional do the job



instead of trying to once again do my own painting and most likely make matters even worse. The paint cans went by the side of the trash where my neighbour promptly picked them up.

Again, I have found that the easiest way to get rid of clutter and junk in the closets is to empty them and then put everything back into them, discarding things that you no longer want or will use. It makes it easier to find things that you really do need when you need them.

In addition to cleaning out closets, also go through your drawers. I do this twice a year as well. Because my house is so small and I dislike the intrusion of a TV in the bedroom but still like to watch TV in bed, I put a small dresser in my one closet and put the TV on top of the dresser. This allows me to watch TV from bed and then close the closet when I am not in the room. The dresser is used for storage of clothes as well. I have another antique dresser in my room that provides me with additional storage. Although I have a small room and a small home, I have made use of space so that I can add more storage. This also eliminates clutter. But it is still important to go through your drawers and get rid of those things that you no longer want or need.

Cleaning out your closets twice a year takes four hours a year for each closet, although some of them can be done in less amount of time. The coat closet, for example, is easy to clean out because it just consists of coats and on the top shelf, neatly placed photo albums. I just go through the coats and donate them once a year to charity.

The pantry is another closet you want to organize. I do this once a month and make sure that everything is neat and all the empty boxes that my kids seem to be collecting as they never think to put them in the trash after they have emptied the contents, get tossed into the recycling bin.

Organizing your house is more than just getting rid of the things that can be seen by the person visiting, but also the things that are hidden away in closets that are jammed with items that you haven't worn in years or things you no longer need or can use. The hidden parts of the home must also be organized in order for you to have a



truly organized home. By doing this, you make more room for when you acquire new things and you also feel better when you need to open your closets or drawers as everything is much more neatly displayed. It gives you a more relaxed feeling, not to mention much more space and a greater ability to find items that you may want to wear or use with much greater ease.





## THE IMPORTANCE OF ROUTINES

Organization also involves developing routines when it comes to cleaning out clutter, closets, drawers as well as cleaning your home. You are better off to have a schedule or some sort of date in mind when it comes to cleaning or your work will never be done. If you get into a habit of cleaning and organizing on a regular basis, your home will not only look cleaner, but you will feel more relaxed.

My mother still has the same routine when it comes to cleaning that she has used since she first got married. She dusts on a certain day, cleans the bathrooms on a certain day, cleans the kitchen on a certain day, etc. This is the way that things were usually done years ago when women had more time to devote to their homes.

Today, not only do we see that most women do not have the same amount of time with regard to housework, but we also see men pitching in to help as well. Whether you are cleaning by yourself or with a partner, you should develop a routine as to when you do your cleaning. You can take one job a day to make it easier, or you can clean your entire house from top to bottom in one day. I use the one day routine with Saturday being cleaning day.

Because I have a small home, I can get my entire house cleaned to



the point where it looks pretty presentable within two to three hours. I start by sweeping the floor of the kitchen, emptying things out of the refrigerator before they become science experiments, cleaning the counters, sink and wiping down the cabinets. Then I take the mop out and clean the floor. The entire room can be done in a half an hour.

After that, I go to the living room, straighten the slipcovers, dust and vacuum. This is another project that only takes about a half hour. I attach a long extension cord to the vacuum so that I can get the hallway and my bedroom as well. I dust the bedroom and then head off for the two bathrooms.

The bathrooms have to be scrubbed down and disinfected. This usually takes about an hour because I have two of them. With the use of proper cleaning supplies and doing this on a regular basis, the cleanliness will easily last a week.

I ignore my kids' rooms because they are now old enough to do this themselves. Both of them know that they have to wash their sheets and clean their rooms in order to be comfortable. Both of them realize that they would rather live in a clean room than a pigsty. I have given them the tools and the knowledge of how to take care of themselves. I am often sorely tempted to clean my daughter's room as she often leaves her room like a tornado whipped through it, but as this would not be teaching her anything, I bite my lip and simply close the door.

THE MAIN THING is that I have a routine. I know just how to get started and when it is over. Here it is again in a nutshell:

- Clean kitchen
- Dust and vacuum living room, hallway and bedrooms
- Clean bathrooms

By developing this routine and doing it every Saturday, it gives me a great satisfaction when it is all over, the house is clean for a while



and I know that next Saturday, I will do it again. If I just cleaned whenever I felt that the house needed it, I could be cleaning all of the time and my work would never be done. The routine gives me a sense of accomplishment and also allows me to relax and not worry about cleaning again until the next week, unless something happens to interrupt the routine - like someone spilling something on the floor.

Routines are not just about cleaning your house, they are a way for you to maintain order and organization in your own life. In addition to cleaning, I also have a cooking routine. I plan out my meals when I go to the grocery store and cook something usually every night for us to eat. There are many, many recipes that are nutritious and can be made in ten minutes or less that you can use when it comes to cooking. Once in a while, take a night off and order a pizza or carry out. But by organizing your menu for the week and having an idea of what to cook, you not only save time, but save money. Eating out all of the time can be expensive and who wants to fret over what they are going to eat for dinner every night?

In addition to helping you with the house, routines will also help you when it comes to raising your children. Little kids thrive on routine. You know how important it is for babies to be fed regularly and changed. Babies thrive on routine as it gives them a sense of security. The same goes for children. I raised my kids with a routine when it came to bedtime. I was never very strict when it came to mapping out each second of their lives and never really wanted them to live in an environment where they had no time to just play or be kids. I encouraged sports and other activities and dutifully drove them to where they had to go. We ended up building the routine of our family around these programs that threw us off kilter when it came to dinners at times. However, I knew my kids were getting a routine at school and would get back into the routine when they were ready for bed.

My brother has little children who go to bed whenever they want. There is a great deal of commotion in that house when it comes to the kids going to bed because they never want to go. As a result, the kids are often up until all hours with no sort of bedtime routine at all.



One of the things that I am very proud of is that I never had any trouble putting my kids to bed and getting them to go to sleep. This was so simple and took an hour at most each night, but once they were in bed, I then had my time to myself, without hearing whining and crying or having to yell upstairs for them to go to sleep. I simply followed an easy routine that made them go to sleep and also enabled them to have plenty of rest for school the next day.

I set a bedtime early on. Before bed, they would each take their showers and then proceed to have cookies and milk. This was some-thing that they looked forward to every night. After cookies and milk time, I took them up to bed and we would go into one of the kids' bedrooms for a story. We alternated between rooms for this purpose. I then proceeded to read to them a story every night. When they were little and their attention spans were short, I would read quickly, sometimes just thumbing through the book and explaining pictures. As they got older, I began to read other books to them. I read them everything from the Berenstain Bears series of books to classics for children such as the Little House series by Laura Ingalls Wilder. The Berenstain Bears we got through in one night. The longer books would take us several nights to read, but each night, they would look forward to hearing more of the story.

Then I would tuck them into their beds, give them a kiss good-night and they would go to sleep. I did this roughly at the same time every night, altering only the books and the type of cookies, and I never had any trouble with them going to bed or even arguing that they didn't want to go to bed. Never underestimate the power of routine when it comes to children and how much easier it can make their life and yours. This routine not only made my kids sleep well at night and not have to make me threaten them to go to bed, but it also made them enjoy reading and as a result of getting enough sleep and learning to appreciate books, they both did well in school.

People with dogs also know the value of routine. If you have a dog, the secret to getting it housebroken and becoming a well behaved dog is routine. Dogs, like children, thrive on routine. Cats don't care as they are in a world of their own, although it does matter



to them that you regularly feed them, change their water and clean their litter box.

Kids and dogs, however, are not the only things that thrive on routine. Adults also feel a sense of comfort at enjoying routines. It does make them have a more organized life as well as a healthier life. If you go to bed the same time each night and wake in the morning at the same time, it is better for your body. If you watch a certain program on TV before you go to bed, you will feel as though you have something to look forward to each night. Most of us all have an innate desire for some sort of structure in our lives.

Routines, however, are not etched in stone. There are times when routines are broken. This happens now and then and you should not get anxious about it. Simply fall back into the routine when whatever situation that drove you out of the routine has calmed down. For example, my bedtime routine for my kids was broken on many occasions such as holidays, parties, overnight trips and vacations. While you want to establish a routine that will make everyone feel more secure and yourself more organized, you also do not want to feel like you are running a boot camp. Becoming so rigid in your routine that you cannot alter it now and then will not make anyone feel more relaxed as you will be so worried about the routine that you skip things that break into your schedule.

Remember earlier when I talked about the Saturday cleaning schedule? Well, there have been times when I have been out of town or had something to do on a Saturday where I couldn't adhere to the schedule. So what did I do? I just did the same thing on Sunday. One time, I skipped cleaning for an entire week because I was out of town and the house didn't fall apart.

So, while the secret of good organization is routine, it should not be one that is so rigid that it defeats the purpose and actually causes anxiety. Learn to try to stick with a routine as much as possible, but do not "tweek out" if something happens to upset the schedule. Just go with the flow and get back into the groove when you can. The routine should be a tool you use to stay organized, not a prison that confines you to a rigid schedule.







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## PAPERS AND PICTURES

P apers and pictures need special care and once lost, are difficult if not impossible to replace. For this reason, I feel compelled to devote an entire chapter on this subject.

I have lost many important papers over my lifetime due to not being organized. Many of these documents were able to be replaced, such as birth certificates, social security cards and marriage certificates. But this also caused me a great deal of stress and I had to pay for them to be replaced. Some papers are lost for good because they were not recorded instruments and merely letters of agreement. Some things I wanted to keep and are gone because I errantly threw them away or lost them somehow. I can give you a list of the many papers that I lost due to disorganization, but I think you get the idea.

Pictures are usually irreplaceable. At least the older ones that were not downloaded to a computer and are not on some flash drive. Pictures are often all we have of a memory, except what is in our minds. Who doesn't like looking through old photographs and reminiscing?

The secret to making sure that you do not lose pictures and papers is to keep them in a place where you know where they are and, if possible in the case of pictures, in some sort of album. If you



have always wanted to make a scrapbook and have a bunch of loose pictures laying around all over the place, gather them up and put them in boxes that are labeled and store them for future use. You can purchase boxes that are made for this purpose or just shoeboxes. Make sure that the boxes are clearly labeled and that the pictures are all stored in a dry, dark place.

One item that may help you organize both pictures and papers is a portable filing cabinet. You can purchase these at any office supply store and get folders as well as file separators to help you organize everything. This way, at least you know where everything is and you can get to it when you need it.

Case in point - a few years ago, my ex-husband was taking my kids on a cruise. This is before you needed a passport to go in and out of the country, but they did need birth certificates. I looked in the mess of papers that contained all my "important documents" that were jumbled together and easily found my daughter's birth certificate, but not my son's. I couldn't find it at all. To make matters even more fun, the day that he told me that they needed the birth certificates was Christmas Eve. They were leaving Christmas night for the cruise. And the courthouse was closing early on Christmas Eve.

Fortunately, he didn't wait an hour to tell me about the needed birth certificate and we rushed to the courthouse and were able to get a birth certificate for my son so that he could go on this cruise. It all worked out, but it had the potential for disaster. Especially since I later found my son's birth certificate in a drawer in the kitchen. The day after Christmas, I went to the office supply store to get organizers for important papers. The other day my daughter needed her social security card for a new job and I was able to go right into the file and pull it out for her. Had I not had this, she might have not been able to get the job.

Many of my pictures are in photo albums, but I still have many loose pictures that I mean to put in photo albums. But although I keep putting this project off, I still have the photos organized by the approximate years, vacation settings or holiday settings in a file box. I have another file box for pictures that were handed down to me that



belonged to my grandparents. They are easy to get to because they are all stored in one place and organized.

If you have a digital camera and take pictures to download to your computer, it is a good idea to get a flash drive that you can label for the pictures. You can also have these printed at your local photo shop. You should organize your pictures so that you have them as a keep-sake of a moment in time that you cannot recreate.

If you take videos of your children or family, you also want to make sure that they are clearly labeled so that they are not accidentally tossed out. One of the most heartbreaking things that I can think of is the fact that my daughter and her friends made a movie with our old video camera one time. It was cute at the time and I stored it with our other videos, but did not label it. I'm sure that it was tossed out accidentally as it is nowhere to be found. And that little video cannot be recreated - it was a moment in time that I would enjoy seeing now that she is grown and it's gone.

So be sure to properly care for and store photos, videos and important papers in a safe place where you can have easy access to them and be able to retrieve them when you want them. At the time you get back a bunch of pictures, you will most likely look at them and put them on a counter where they will eventually move to a drawer and then possibly lost. You may not think of them at the time, but someday, you will want to see those photos to remember that event.

There are numerous ways to get organized when it comes to documents and photos. The best way is to use a waterproof file case where you can have everything at your fingertips whenever you need it. It can take you a while to sort through your papers and pictures to organize them, but it will be time well spent.





## HELPFUL GADGETS THAT MAKE HOME ORGANIZING EASIER

**T**here are many gadgets that you can purchase to help you better organize your home. These can stretch space and make it easier for you to keep things in a place where you can find them. Here is a list of some of the gadgets that you can use to help better organize your home:

- Cleaning caddy
- Closet organizers
- Shoe organizers
- Vacuum sealed bags
- Hooks
- Lazy Susan
- Storage furniture
- Tool kits
- File organizers
- Computer software programs (for bank accounts)
- Stackable shelves
- Laundry separation device

A cleaning caddy can hold all of your cleaning products and



make it easier for you to find everything when you need to clean instead of having to haul out individual bottles and sprays. You can store everything in this caddy and save time as well as space in your utility closet with this handy gadget that is available at most stores that sell buckets and other cleaning goods.

Closet organizers can be installed on your own and are available in most home improvement stores. If you do not have a closet organizer and cannot afford to make this investment, you can purchase stackable hangers that will give you more room in your closet.

Shoe racks are an old organizing tool that not only keep your shoes all lined up and looking neat, but also keep them from being damaged. You can also purchase shoe organizers that allow you to stack your shoes in a box that is covered with a clear plastic cover that slips under the bed.

Vacuum sealed bags can allow you to put all of your clothes into a bag and then seal it so that the air is removed. These are waterproof and compact the clothes so that you take up a great deal less space and can be used to store seasonal clothes as well as for packing suitcases.

Hooks can be placed on the interior of closets that can allow you to hang up certain items like cleaning brushes, mops and even tools. You can purchase stick on hooks at just about any hardware or home improvement store.

A Lazy Susan is an old organizing tool that used to be standard with some kitchen cabinets. You can still have this type of cabinet installed in your home today as it usually goes in the corner of the kitchen cabinets. The interior of the cabinet spins around, giving you easy access to everything and also making the most of your cabinet space. You can purchase these items in some home improvement and other stores that can go into your cabinet to make the most of your space, make your cabinets more organized and give you easy access to items.

Storage furniture comes in all shapes and sizes. As I said earlier, I put an old dresser in my closet to give me extra space. I have a cedar chest that I use as a coffee table. The more storage space you have in



your home, the easier it is to keep things organized. You can use cabinets for storing collectibles that you can use for display. Make all of your furniture count so that you have enough storage in your home. The main reason people find that their house is unorganized is because they do not have anywhere to put their items. By increasing your storage space, you then increase your ability to get organized.

Tool kits are an easy way to keep your tools all in one place. Even if you do not have a lot of tools, you most likely have hammers, pliers and screwdrivers that you use for certain chores. By having a tool kit or tool box you can not only store these items much easier, but you can find them when you are ready to use them.

File organizers have been discussed previously in this book as a way that you can store photos and papers. You can purchase these at any office supply store. You can easily find anything you are looking for when it is properly filed. You can also use these items to store bills and receipts.

Computer software programs can be used to store your financial information and allow you to be organized when it comes to your money. It can also help you prepare your taxes and keep track of all of your bills and other expenses. There are various computer software programs that you can use for this purpose. When it comes to being organized, you also need to make sure that your finances are organized as well.

Stackable shelves can be put in a playroom or basement for storage of toys and even seasonal items. There are bins that you can use with these shelves as well. This can make it easier for you to keep a playroom or basement much neater and will also keep the things off of the floor. One of the things that many people worry about when it comes to clutter is kids' toys. However, kids grow up soon enough and will no longer want these toys. Do your best when it comes to organizing them but never feel that kids toys make your home a mess - it is never a bad thing to have a home in which children play. Still, you can make it neater by using these stackable shelves.

Laundry separation devices can be an easy way to store clothes that are ready for washing. One of the best types you can get is one



with washable hanging nets. These are relatively inexpensive and can help you keep clothes sorted by color or type that are ready for the wash. Instead of just leaving clothes in baskets, you can take them to the laundry area and wash as needed as they are all separated.

There are many more organizing tools that can help you keep your home organized. Space saving devices are also space saving items that you can use to keep organized as well as have extra room. You may want to consider a pull down ironing board or a table top ironing board for pressing clothes. You can find many different tools to help keep you organized by going to a home improvement store or even shopping for them online.





## TEN TIPS ON SAVING TIME EVERY DAY

**P**art of being organized is making sure that your time is organized.

You will feel less under stress if you use some time saving tips to help you throughout the day. Here are 10 tips on saving time that you can use every day in order to save time:

### 1. Make school lunches the night before

Instead of rushing around in the morning, trying to get everyone ready for school and work, make school lunches the night before and put them in the refrigerator. Label them in bags and they are ready to go the next morning.

### 2. Lay your clothes out the evening before

Another way to save time every day is to pick out your clothes that you are going to wear the night before and have them ready for you in the morning. This can save you time in the morning as you do not have to waste time in a groggy state trying to figure out what to wear.



**3. Do errands on your lunch hour**

Instead of just sitting in the lunchroom, take the time to do some errands and get some things that you need for home. This can save you a trip to the store after work and will help you stay organized.

**4. Do your banking online**

You can pay your bills online and also have an automatic deposit of your check into your bank account. Most employers encourage automatic deposits and the good news is that the money is available for you right away. This saves you a trip to the bank as well as time when it comes to writing out checks to pay bills and mailing them.

**5. Send packages Priority Mail**

You can have Priority Mail boxes delivered to your home from the post office and have any package picked up right at your home. You should have these boxes, which are free, available at your home so that whenever you have to mail a package. It can save you time in going to the post office.

**6. Fill up your gas tank when you need gas**

Instead of having to stop all of the time at the gas station for gas, fill up your tank. This saves you time and is much more of an organized way to keep track of how much gas you use each week. Since you are likely to use up the gas anyway, you might as well fill it up and save countless trips to the gas station.

**7. Put an extension cord on your vacuum cleaner**

This is a simple tip that can save you time in moving the cord of the vacuum cleaner when you are vacuuming. You can get to all of the rooms at once and minimize changing the cord into different sockets, thus saving you time.



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### **8. Wake up 15 minutes early to exercise**

Not only will you be feel more energized, but this can also save you time in going to the gym. If you like to go to the gym, this is another thing that you can do on your lunch hour if you can find one close to where you work.

### **9. Make casseroles and dinners two nights a week**

Instead of trying to figure out what you are going to cook for dinner each night, make dinner in advance. Two nights a week, or on the weekends, you can make such things like casseroles that will keep in the refrigerator. There was a story about a woman a few years ago who cooked for an entire year and put things into a chest freezer in portions. This may be going to the extreme, but you can cook in advance and save yourself an enormous amount of time.

### **10. Have dinner out once a week**

Once a week, treat yourself and your family to carry out foods. This will save you time and give you a break from the kitchen. We always called this “Fast Food Fridays.” It was a nice way to start the weekend without having to cook dinner and everyone enjoyed the different foods. Each week, someone in the family got to pick the carry out of choice.

There are other time saving tips you can use. For example, if you have to go downstairs to do laundry, do not go empty handed when you come up. Bring up something that you need and condense your trips. This can help you save yourself many trips up and down the steps.

Saving time makes you much more organized. This can be the first step in getting organized. As you continue to organize your time, you will come up with other time saving tips for yourself as well.







## HOW TO ORGANIZE YOUR OFFICE

**H**aving an unorganized office can be a recipe for disaster in the business world. It can be very easy for things to get out of control and for your performance to begin to suffer. It is important to get things in your control and organized in your office as soon as possible.

Start by organizing your paperwork. Use file holders and make sure that your cabinets are all in order. Use labels and file paperwork accordingly. This is the first step towards organizing your office.

You have to also organize your time when you are in the office. Your time is one of your greatest assets at work. Many people find that they waste a great deal of time when it comes to work because they allow others to dictate their time instead of making their own time count. You need to prioritize the work that you have to do and get done first before other work. If you work in any type of average office, there is always some sort of emergency arising or fire that needs to be put out. You often will have to stop working on a project to take care of these emergencies. This does not mean that you cannot be organized. To the contrary, you need to be organized so that you can effectively prioritize your work and get the job done. You also have to be able to be flexible in your organization.



One way to do this is to map out your day so that you have a goal set of what you plan to do for the day. Leave some time open so that in case an emergency arises, you can take care of it. Have a list in front of you for what you plan to do each day and check off the projects as you finish them. Each day should begin with goals that will enable you to do your work. Keeping a list of these goals is one of the most effective ways to organize your time in the office.

Leave out personal phone calls or at the very least, keep them to a minimum. People tend to waste time in the office talking to other employees or talking on the phone with friends and family. This not only throws you off kilter with regard to your organization, but it can also catch the eyes of the boss. If your employer sees that you are idle for a good part of the day, or wasting time talking, they may feel that you are not necessary to the staff. These days, it pays to be as productive as ever when it comes to work.

If you are in the position of calling for meetings, make sure that they are short and to the point. Prepare ahead of time by using software like Power Point and printing up information so that everyone can be informed to your point and then keep the information for later use.

Be sure to take your lunch and breaks as scheduled. Some people have the idea that they should work through their lunch that they will be more productive. This is not true. People who skip their lunch often get less done because they get burned out. You need to take a break once in a while for lunch and coffee so that you can be more effective at work.

Keep up to date with the latest computer technology that can also help you stay more organized. There are many office programs available that you can use for this purpose. I worked at an office once where one woman got promoted continually because she kept the company up to date on all of the latest software that better organized the office. She ended up carving out her own position by simply keeping abreast of technology, learning it and then teaching it to others.

Make sure that you keep your computer free from dust and use a



tool that will keep the keyboard clean. Keep coffee and drinks away from the computer so that you do not end up spilling it on the keyboard and harming your computer.

If you smoke, take the minimal amount of breaks for a cigarette. Most companies allow employees who smoke to go outside for cigarettes during their breaks or other times. You should not spend too much time doing this as it eats into your working time.

By keeping your office papers organized, using the right organizational tools and making sure that you make the most of your time when you are in the office, you will find that you are much more productive. Keeping a list of goals and writing them down is one way that you can make sure that you are doing your job each day. Remember to be flexible enough so that you can help with emergency situations that arise during working hours.





## USING THE COMPUTER TO HELP STAY ORGANIZED

**O**ne way that you can get organized is to make use of your computer.

You can print up schedules and also keep a calendar with a list of what you have to do each day. You can get email updates as to your daily activities and appointments. Once you get used to using the computer to be organized, you will wonder how you ever got along without it.

You can also use your computer for your banking. You can arrange to have all of your bills paid online, which saves you time and makes sure that you are not missing any payments. It is safe to bank online as banks use a special security and encoding system to prevent hacking. I have been paying my bills online and receiving automatic deposits for years and have never run into a problem.

Another way that you can use the computer to be organized online is that you can keep track of your bank balances. Make sure that you have the money that you think you have in your bank account. When you get automatic payments to your bank account, the money is available right away. You do not have to worry about cashing checks, waiting for checks to clear or possibly using them.

There are programs that you can use on your word processing program that can keep you organized as well. You can print up sched-



ules to hang on the refrigerator, menus for the week, chore assignments and even plan a party using these tools. You should be sure to make use of this technology in order to stay organized.

Organizing your life is more than just being able to keep a clean house and keep things in order. It also involves planning. For example, you can print up a grocery list and check the items that you need when you go shopping. If you go grocery shopping without a list, you not only end up spending more money than you would usually spend, but you also spend more time rummaging around the store.

The computer is a wonderful tool for staying organized and planning out various aspects of your life. You can even go online and get quick and easy recipes, for free, when you use this tool.

If you have a business, you can do your payroll and organize your finances on programs that will help you figure your income taxes and business taxes due. You can also go online and find forms that you can use to apply for certain benefits. If you are on social security, you can use the website to find out where your checks are and other benefits. You can use a pin number and discover information that you would otherwise have to wait for by mail.

Applying for unemployment benefits? Many states allow you to apply right online. More and more government agencies are moving towards computer applications to avoid crowds in the agencies.

Paying your taxes? It is easy to do right online. Not only will you be able to get your taxes sooner, but you will also get your return much more quickly. And you can have the refund put directly into your bank account. This saves you time and helps you stay organized, especially if you have been using computer programs to help you keep track of your expenses and income throughout the year.

You can use programs like Excel when you are trying to create spreadsheets. This is not a difficult program to learn and you can use it in business to create graphs and also keep track of payments due. Most offices require that their employees use this program.

Take advantage of computer technology to remember birthdays and special occasions so that you can send cards. There are even



websites that will send cards to those on your list automatically, mailing them for you and thus saving you even more time.

By using the computer, you are taking advantage of the latest tools to stay organized. You can plan, print and do both home and business work right on the computer as well as keep track of your finances. This is one tool that you cannot do without when it comes to being organized. You will find that there are so many uses for the computer that can simplify your life and make it easier.





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## HELPING YOUR KIDS STAY ORGANIZED

**W**hen you have kids, you want them to stay organized as well.

You should teach them the value of being organized early on. One way to do this is to be organized yourself. Teach them to do tasks that they can handle so that they not only develop a sense of self esteem, but do not end up losing papers and having some teacher write on their report cards that they are very unorganized. I am happy to say that neither of my kids ever got this report.

Give them the proper tools that they need for organization. Most schools will give a list of supplies and want you to get file folders and spiral notebooks for each class. Get them in different colors and label them so that your child understands how much easier it is for them to get their homework done and keep track of it with these tools. You can also get them a planner to make sure that they write their assignments down. These are tools that most schools are offering to students today to teach them the value of organization. The old “dog ate my homework” is not a good excuse. Although that being said, our dog did mangle my son’s homework one time. But it was still useable.

Teach them, when they are old enough, how to keep their rooms



tidy. The importance of washing their sheets every week and why. Have them put their laundry into the proper bins when they are old enough to do this and when they get older, have them do their own laundry. You may feel as though you are being cruel to make them do these chores, but just the opposite is true. If you do everything for them, how are they supposed to know how to organize themselves.

When you go on a trip, have them watch you as you pack for them when they are young. This teaches them what is needed to go on a trip. I did this with both of my kids. I would pack for them when they were young, started teaching them how to pack as they got older and then had them pack for themselves when they were about 7 or 8 years old.

A funny story involves my daughter and I going to girl scout camp. Now I thought I was organized, although I really didn't want to go on this God forsaken trip. I was never much for camping but had to go as I was a co-leader.

The other leader of the trip was very organized. But to the point where she did everything. Still, both of our daughters packed their own clothes. When we got to the camp, the other leader found that her daughter forgot her underwear and some other things.

As she stood there screaming about this, I began to unpack my bags and found that I brought my toothbrush, but forgot the toothpaste. My daughter, however, remembered and packed it. She also remembered the hairdryer, another item I forgot. She was organized and didn't forget anything. My excuse for being unorganized on this particular trip (as I can usually am pretty well organized for vacation) is that I just didn't want to be there and was probably hoping that I would forget something that could send me home.

As my children grew older, I taught them to be more organized. They learned how to do chores, the importance of taking out the garbage every day and doing dishes. They learned how to do their own laundry and the importance of why these things had to be done.

Teach your kids the value of organizing their money. You can teach them the budget system. One system that I used was to give them their allowance in cash and some envelopes. I had them mark



each envelope with what they planned to use the money on. They deposited a few dollars at a time in these envelopes and when they had enough money, could do as planned. This taught them the value of saving for something as well as budgeting their money. It helped them when they opened their checking accounts.

You should start teaching your kids organization tools as soon as they are old enough to understand the concept. Do not try to force them to do things that they are not yet old enough to do as this will only frustrate them. But give them a good example (sans my camping trip packing) and show them how as well as teach them why they are doing something. As they get older, give them leeway to do things themselves. If they forget something, do not berate them. Use it as a learning tool.

Use these tips in this book to not only help you organize your life, but also to pass on your organization to others, such as your children and even co-workers, yourself. By being organized, everyone feels better about their life and also has a bit more security and control over their life which sometimes seems as though it is out of control. Do not allow yourself or anyone in your family to feel as though they are a hamster spinning on a wheel. Learn to organize your life, home and work with the easy lessons learned in this book.

