

Topics:

- How to Manage your Paperwork
- Conquering Clutter at Work and at Home
- Creating an Action Plan

Don't Give Up — You CAN Get Organized!

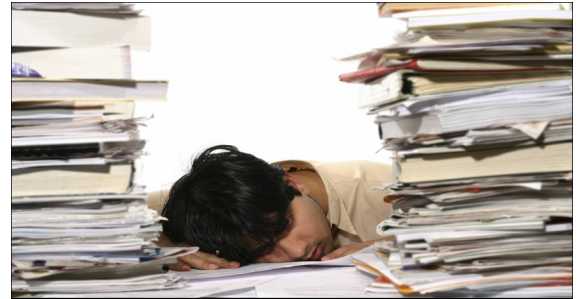
Sure, getting organized can seem like an overwhelming, hopeless chore at first but in the fast-paced environment we all live and work in today, it's an essential survival skill.

Start by taking a step back and reminding yourself why you want to get organized in the first place.

Maybe you want to:

- Gain a sense of control
- Increase your self-confidence
- Reduce stress related to lost information
- Make better use of your skills
- Set a good example
- Spend less time looking for things
- Manage multiple activities and deadlines more easily
- Clear the clutter around you

You can accomplish all this and more by getting organized.



Need a "Toss List ?"

Here's some suggestions:

Product solicitations If you aren't ready to buy right now toss ads, mailings and catalogs. New ones will be sent to you.

Duplicates of documents Generally, there is no reason to keep more than two copies of any document.

Old research materials, drafts or literature They're probably not relevant now and take up needed space.

Old magazines, books and articles If you haven't referred to them in the last year, commit them to the circular file because you are unlikely to *ever* need them.

Tool Kit

Managing Clutter Using "S.P.A.C.E."

- Sort** Examine each item and group them into similar categories.
- Purge** Begin by handling every item and asking , "Do I use this, need this or love this?" If the answer is no, give it away, sell it at a yard sale or on Ebay, or toss it.
- Assign a Home** Examine all the items you're keeping and decide precisely where you want to store them— i.e., which shelf, draw or cabinet etc.
- Containerize** Select appropriate containers where required.
- Evaluate** Once finished, monitor and adjust your system as needed to maintain its' effectiveness.

Inside this Issue:

Why Organize?	1
5 Steps for Organization	1
Keeping Motivated	2
Handling Paper Clutter	2
Organizing your Time	3
How Checklists Can Help	4
Additional Resources	4

The Secret To Banishing Clutter Is to Get Started and Keep Going

Many people find that calling up the energy to tackle their clutter is quite a feat. They start out with the best of intentions but find themselves derailed by Anxiety - Boredom - Distractedness - Fatigue - General Resistance - or a variety of other energy-sapping emotions that stop you before you start. What's the answer?

Keeping yourself **motivated** will provide the fuel you need to let go of clutter. Below are some suggestions to help keep you going.

1. Give Yourself Credit

When you keep beating yourself up over past failures and anticipated new ones, your energy takes a beating too. Be positive. You CAN do this. Banish any negative, deflating thoughts like "I'm no good at this" or "I can't make decisions" or "I'll never get through all these piles" or "What's the use, it's hopeless." Instead, focus on the things you already do well and give yourself some credit.

2. Visualize

If you can easily locate a camera, take "before" pictures of your clutter. It will be great to compare with your "after" results. Create a clear vision in your mind of your "after" or even try sketching out how the newly organized space will look when you're done.

3. Reward Yourself

Assist your motivation by promising yourself a gift at completion that gives you an incentive to move forward. The rewards should be appropriate to your budget but something that really appeals to you. It could be tickets to a concert or the theatre, a book or CD, flowers, cookies, a massage or dinner out—you name it.



Music works well as a motivational de-cluttering tool. Play any music that lifts your spirits and quickens your pace while you work.

The Paper Chase - Purging Paper and Clearing Your Piles

Paper clutter is denser than non-paper clutter because there are more pieces per pile. For this reason, it can seem overwhelming. If the task appears daunting, don't take on too much at once. Tackle only one or two boxes or piles a day. Start by picking up each piece and asking yourself:

What is this?

Why would I want to keep it?

When would I ever need it?

Where would I look for it?

What you're looking for is a quick, specific answer to just one or more of these questions to decide whether the paper should be **referred** to

someone else, **acted** on, **filed**, or **tossed**. Once you have decided which of these four options is best, write a small R, A, F, or T on the corner of the document. When finished, sort into piles and handle each paper accordingly.



Subscribitis: A condition caused by subscribing to more publications than you can possibly read in your lifetime.

Approximately one daily newspaper or bulletin plus one weekly publication plus two monthlies is about the maximum manageable number for many people.

If you never get the time to read them consider canceling the excessive subscriptions or changing the mailing address to donate them to the local library or nursing home.

Set Up An Effective Filing System For Your Papers

Letting go of paper clutter involves two types of time: **project time** to set up a filing system and **maintenance time** to keep that system effective. This means you need to “weed” your files on a regular basis. How often? That depends. Some people like the “one file a day” method while others prefer to do annual or bi-annual “weeding”.

A popular method is the **In-Out Rule** that states whenever you file a paper, see if you can get rid of something else from that file. Even if you only do this 50% of the time, it will have a beneficial, file-slimming impact for your system.

But beware of these **time zappers** while handling papers:

Lingering—Spending too much time reading or staring at it

Sidetracking—Stopping to “do” various papers such as create a new file or make a phone call

Postponing—Putting things aside to decide what to do with them “later” (which could often end up being never).

Three filing errors to avoid:

- Too many categories
- Too few categories
- Labels that aren't readable



Guidelines For Managing Time When Organizing

Make the effort to organize your time:

- Keep a log of how you spend your time for at least a week.
 - ▶ Categorize the way you spend time (e.g., returned phone calls, meetings, Email).
 - ▶ Just make quick notes; don't let the log become a time waster.
- Identify your main priorities to determine how you should spend your time.
- Compare your log with your other priorities.
 - ▶ Are you spending enough time on high priority items rather than low ones?
 - ▶ Identify and eliminate (or delegate) low priority tasks where possible.
- Identify the time of day when you feel most energetic and motivated.
 - ▶ Break large or daunting tasks into pieces and do a small piece at a time.
 - ▶ Try to schedule your most complex or challenging tasks for that time.
 - ▶ Tackle your most difficult or time-consuming tasks early.
- Use a calendar and to-do lists to better control your time.
 - ▶ Create daily to-do lists and start with top priority activities and tasks first.
 - ▶ Allow more time than you think you need for each task on your list.
- At the end of each day, review the list.
 - ▶ Cross off everything that's been completed or become obsolete or irrelevant.
 - ▶ Determine items on the list that still need doing and transfer them to a new list.
- Read documents and emails only once; then file, pass on, act on them or throw away.
- Ask to be removed from distribution lists that are of no interest to you.

**If possible,
read E-mails
no more than
one
or two
pre-determined
times during
the day.**

**Junk is Stuff We
Throw Away;
Stuff is Junk
We Keep**

Learn to Say “NO”

Beware of the following
“opportunities.”

While they are designed to make you believe they will save you money, saying “yes” to too many of them may actually extract your valuable time and energy.

- ▶ Airline mileage programs
- ▶ “Frequent buyer” programs
- ▶ Supermarket “savings clubs”
- ▶ Restaurant 2-for-1 coupons
- ▶ Mail-in rebates
- ▶ “Buy one, get one free”
- ▶ Sweepstakes-style contests
- ▶ “Free gift” w/purchase offers

While these offers may be worthwhile sometimes, do not say yes automatically to all of them without considering the cost in paper clutter, upkeep, creating an organizing system to track them etc.

Make sure the benefits consistently outweigh the drawbacks.

Additional Resources

Books: *Let Go of Clutter*, 2001, Schechter, Harriet. McGraw-Hill
Organized to Be Your Best! 4th ed. 2000, Silver, Susan. Adams-Hall

Websites: www.getorganizednow.com,
www.straighten-up-now.com

Contact Us at: University Human Resources,
Learning & Professional Development

Master List Form

Calls

Correspondence/ To Send

Projects/To Do

Errands/To Go

To Order/To Obtain

Miscellaneous

Remember to
de-clutter your
to-do list
by deciding
which projects you
don't *really*
have to do
and removing them.



Maintenance Checklists

Some tasks need to be done too often to keep noting them on your to-do lists but you still find that you sometimes forget them. If so, you might benefit from making a customized maintenance checklist like this one:

- ✓ Make bed
- ✓ Put recycling at curb
- ✓ Take vitamins
- ✓ Walk/exercise
- ✓ Water plants
- ✓ Empty wastebaskets
- ✓ Back up computer hard drive
- ✓ Make grocery list
- ✓ Water lawn
- ✓ Clean litterbox