

## Tips to start an organizing project

### Decide on an area to organize

Begin your project by deciding on which area you would like to focus. Many times, we look at the entire house or office and we are instantly overwhelmed. Narrow your focus by choosing only one small area to start.

If you are working in an office, the area could be one filing drawer of outdated papers. I generally recommend beginning either in an area that will make the most impact or the least disruption. In the office, for example, cleaning off the desktop might make the biggest impact visually but if you are unable to find homes for all the items on the desk, it will create a huge disruption when you are unable to find bills and other important documents. Whereas removing items from the couch that do not belong on it will have a big impact and make the living room more inviting.

### Visualize the result you want

Look at the space you have decided to organize and ask yourself a few questions. What do you want the space to look like when you are finished? How do you want it to feel? What tasks do you want to be able to do in the space? What is the purpose of the space? What works about the space? What does not work?

Answering these questions will help you make decisions about how much to keep in the space, what to remove and the kinds of things that you may need to purchase to complete the project.

If you are having difficulty in deciding what to do with items, you can ask yourself if they fit within your vision of the final result. If not, consider getting rid of the items or setting them aside to go through again later. Sometimes when we are not ready to let something go right away, we can come back to it in a week or month later and be ready to toss the items out or know how we want to use the items. Be sure to schedule a time to reevaluate these items.

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### **Break the project up into smaller steps**

Now that you have decided which area to work on and how you want the space to look, decide what steps you will need to take. For most projects, you will need to begin by de-cluttering. Do you have a category of items that can be removed or tossed right away? In a bedroom, there might be dirty laundry on the floor that can be collected for the wash, or empty food wrappers in an office that can be tossed.

Next, identify the major categories of items that need to be grouped together. In the office, you will have books, notebooks and binders, office supplies and papers. Then, group similar items according to use or category such as papers or printer supplies. This “rough sort” will allow you to quickly sort items in to broad categories. Later you will sort the individual items into their final homes.

After de-cluttering and sorting, you will want to decide if you are making changes to the layout of the space. Will you be changing the configuration of the furniture? Do you want new furniture or a new use for the space? Are you replacing the carpet or painting the walls? Make your plan according to the vision you have for the space. Do not worry about trying to get the project done all in one session. Just figure out the steps that you need to accomplish your project.

### **Set goals to accomplish the individual tasks**

Once your project is defined and the steps, needed to make your proposed project a reality, are identified, set goals for completing the project. Write out all the steps in your project and then schedule a time to complete each of the steps. By scheduling time for yourself to do your project you will be more likely to work on organizing because, you have made a commitment to yourself. If you need extra help or support, enlist a friend and schedule time when you both can work.

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In an office, your goals might be something like clean one drawer of the filing cabinet each day for the next four days. Then sort papers from the desk and file in the newly cleaned drawers in the next session. Once all the de-cluttering and sorting is finished, a session might consist of deep cleaning the space and rearranging the furniture. Finally, the remaining items will be containerized in bins that you already have or newly purchased containers and put away.

### **Maintain your organization**

Now that your space is organized and looks how you want it to look, practice maintaining your newfound organization. Periodically take five or ten minutes to go through the space picking up and putting away all the things that have been left out or have crept in from other areas. This should be a breeze since everything now has a well defined home.

If you find that you are not putting a particular item away or if you are not using something the way you may have envisioned, try something different. Many times, we think that we are disorganized or lazy because a system that works for someone else does not work for us. This is just not true. No single organizing system works for everyone. Go back and look at what is working, what is not working and see if you can see a better way for you.

### **Organization is the reward**

Organizing a space can be a long and difficult process depending on the amount of clutter and your ability to make decisions about your things. However, it is well worth the investment of time. Work in small increments over time and commit to the changes as you go. You will be more successful than powering through the project all at once and then failing to maintain your progress. You will automatically begin feel more relaxed and less stressed when entering the space. Your home will feel calmer when it is organized and you will be able to be more productive in your office.

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