



Order in the House

5 steps to freedom

1) De-clutter. Try the *Onion Edit*®. Think of each room in your home as a giant onion. Peel away one layer at a time. Start by clearing any junk from the room. The next day search for duplicates and donate them to charity. The third day process piles of paper, do a book review or sort through your clothes closet. Keep this up until you have tackled all of your problem areas.

This system works well for people who do not have a big chunk of time to devote to de-cluttering. It is a gradual process and won't make a big mess. So if you have a room that has been nagging you for awhile, take 15-30 minutes a day, every day for a week. Repeat as necessary.

2) Create a home. Every single item that you own needs its own specific place to rest. Once you have accomplished that, employ the one-in one-out rule. That means that if you buy a new pair of shoes you should donate or toss a pair of shoes. I'll take it one step further, if you don't have a place to put something new, don't buy it. As a space planner, I used to tell people to buy a nice set of coordinating hangers for their newly outfitted closet, and then challenged them to never buy additional hangers. It enforces the in-out rule!

3) Set up systems. Insure success by keeping things easy to maintain. Look around your home for problem areas. Once you've found the problem area, identify why you have the problem and then create a solution that works for you.

- If there are always piles of coats, book bags and boots at the back door, create a place for all of the items. Buy hooks, purchase lockers or a storage bench with baskets to hold backpacks and mittens.
- Do you constantly find yourself searching for lost library books? Create a library book basket. When a person is done reading the book for the night, pop it in the basket. Our library gives us a receipt. I post this, so I know how many books are checked out and when they are due.
- Find a container that can hold car keys, cell phones and outgoing mail, to avoid a mad search each morning.
- If piles of mail, catalogs and magazine are spilling over on the counter, devise a sorting system. Open the mail. Route it to the proper person and put catalogs and magazines in a to-be read basket.
- If your young artist has you swimming in art projects, buy an under bed box and let them choose what to keep. The only rule is that the cover must close!

4) Simplify Routines. Put yourself on a schedule.

- Declare an errand day. Tell everyone in the family that you will do all of the errands on one day and they should have their requests to you by that day.
- Decide on the best way to do laundry. Should you save it for one day, do a load in the morning or pop a load in at night and dry it in the morning? It doesn't matter how you do it as long as you plan it.
- The same goes for cleaning. Break it down by chore, assign each day its own chore or do it all on one day. Whatever you do just make sure you have a structure to follow.
- Write out a menu plan for the week and you'll only have to grocery shop once a week.

5) Maintenance. This is the bottom line, nothing will work if you don't maintain it. So tidy up a few minutes before work or before you go to bed. Remember to hang things up and put things back. When you leave the room, take something with you and return it where it belongs.

Once you've trained yourself to do that, think about preventive maintenance. Remember the old adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." The more you can prevent, the less you will have to maintain later!

- 1) Put doormats at the door and keep out 80% of the dirt that enters your home. "Catch the dirt at the door," advises cleaning guru, Don Aslett.
- 2) Put a cookie sheet under a casserole dish that is likely to bubble over. Thus catching spills and keeping them off the oven floor.
- 3) Wipe up spills before they get caked on. Clean grease and food from the stove top before it bakes on and hardens.
- 4) Wipe down the walls of the shower daily and you won't have to fight with mildew later.
- 5) Use impermeable mattress and pillow covers to keep dust mites out of pillows and mattresses. This helps keep your bedroom allergen-free and makes pillows and mattresses last longer.
- 6) Keep a vacuum's width between furniture or between a chair and the wall. That simple trick will insure that you won't have to move the furniture each week thereby making vacuuming a little easier each week.

These five steps will free your schedule and make you more efficient. Your house will be in order and easier to maintain. You will gain more time for yourself and the interests and hobbies you've yearned to pursue. *Just imagine....*

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