



Organizing 101

Three steps to bring order to your home:

There are three basic steps to *bringing order* to your house.

1. Eliminate the clutter.
2. Make a place for everything that remains.
3. Stop future clutter at the door.

Then, *maintain order!* This is vital. Just a few minutes a day can make the difference between order and chaos.

1) CUT THE CLUTTER

Organization can be such an intimidating word. We tend to think there is only one key to accomplishing things in a super-efficient manner. The truth is there isn't just one way to organize. Here are three different approaches to eliminate the clutter:

Plan A: Conquer Categories

Mentally separate possessions by category: clothing, toys, dishes, tools, files, books and so forth. Start with the least intimidating area. For you it may be clothes. For another it may be tools. Eliminate all the items in that category that you don't need or love. Once you've completed that category, move to another.

Plan B: The Onion Edit

Think of each room in your house as a giant onion. Peel off one layer at a time. Start with junk, then duplicates, then things you don't love. After that you can tackle paper, books and gifts. This works well if you don't have a large chunk of time. Eliminate the junk today and the duplicates tomorrow.

Plan C: Weed by Three

This is the time tested method. It involves you, three boxes and your most aggravating room. Mark the boxes: *Throw*, *Recycle* and *Donate*. Place

items in the appropriate box. If a whole room seems too daunting, start with a closet or drawer.

A Few Helpful Hints

Gather the tools you will need. Boxes for sorting things, cleaning supplies, trash bags, markers, labels and packing tape are all helpful. The goal is to leave the room as few times as possible. It is too easy to get distracted if you step out of the room to get supplies or throw things away.

Work around the room in a clockwise fashion. Don't crisscross. It is inefficient and creates confusion.

Do not empty everything onto the floor! Techniques like that only work when you have a whole team working to organize a family. You don't want to become discouraged or make the situation worse!

Start Sorting. Divide items into three piles: 1) things you love; 2) things you no longer want and 3) undecided items. Once this is done, subdivide the items you no longer want into three categories: throw, recycle, donate. When it comes to undecided items, ask yourself these questions: Do I love it? Do I use it? Would someone else appreciate it more than I do? If you still can't decide, box the items and store them for six months. After six months, reevaluate the items. Sometimes it's easier to make hard decisions on the second pass.

2) ESTABLISH ORDER

Make a place for everything. As the saying goes, "A place for everything and everything in its place." If items have their own [homes](#), it will be much easier to put them away. Create centers for things like bill paying, gift wrapping and photo management. Keep all the supplies together in one place. You won't have to search for the stamps or the calculator if you know it will always be in the bill paying center.

3) DON'T LET IT IN THE DOOR

Know that you will have to change some habits. Be mindful of what you bring into your home. Make this your mantra: Do I really need it? Do I love it? Practice delayed gratification: Only buy items that you really need and really love.

Regarding endless streams and stacks of paper: Call the [Direct Marketing Association](#) and "opt out" of receiving junk mail. Open your mail immediately, recycling as much paper as possible.

FINALLY: *MAINTAIN ORDER*

Follow the advice of this old saying:

If you take it out, put it back.

If you take it off, hang it up.

If you open it, close it.

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