

Eliminate Chaos

May – June 2008

Live an Organized Life

Often people are so overwhelmed by their stacks and piles of stuff that they simply do not know where to start. First of all, you have to realize organization doesn't have a one-size-fits-all approach. In fact, there's no right or wrong way to do it. Organizing is a process, not an event. The chaos and clutter you're experiencing did not magically appear yesterday and unfortunately will not disappear tomorrow. But you can eliminate clutter more quickly than it accumulated.

Organizing is about creating and maintaining systems that works for you every day. Daily maintenance is the most important step. Without that, the system will break down and your once organized kitchen, closet or garage may quickly clutter-up again. Start with an area that has been bugging you, like your child's overflowing toy box, or that cabinet stuffed with random things. Find a small task and build on from there. Whatever you choose to do first, make sure it allows you to see your progress and feel a sense of accomplishment. Here are 10 steps to help you tackle any organizing goal:

1. DEDICATE TIME

If you simply say, "I'll get organized someday," that someday will never come. You need to plan to get organized and schedule the time.

2. GATHER SUPPLIES

No, this is not the shopping step; it is the step where you gather the garbage can, recycling bin or boxes for items you will be eliminating!

3. ESTABLISH A STAGING AREA

If the area you're working in is small, spread out into another area where you can temporarily use the space for the next step — sorting.

4. SORT

It's easy to let yourself get distracted, but the entire process breaks down when you don't stay focused on the task at hand. During the sorting process, you will make a decision about whether each item still serves a purpose in your life. Remember, indecisions lead to clutter!

5. PURGE AND ELIMINATE

During the sorting phase, you may find duplicate items or stuff you no longer treasure. Eliminate it!

6. GROUP "LIKE" ITEMS TOGETHER

Your goal is to sort your items into groups of similar items so you can see just how much you have in each category.

7. EXAMINE YOUR SPACE

Is there enough space for what you are organizing? Do you need to take measurements of the area so you can look for organizing products or systems?



Laura Leist is a local Certified Professional Organizer and the author of "Eliminate Chaos...The 10-Step Process to Organize Your Home & Life." Contact her at eliminatechaos.com

8. SHOP

And you thought you'd never get to this step! The best part of organizing! This is where many get into trouble – they shop first before they know what is being organized and the space available. Make sure you follow the previous steps before shopping. When you're ready, be sure to take a list with you, including measurements!

9. INSTALL PRODUCT

This could be as simple as putting things in a new container, or slightly more time consuming when it comes to installing a new closet or garage organizing system.

10. MAINTAIN

Take five to 10 minutes each day to maintain your new organizational systems. As you organize, you will be establishing a "home" for everything you keep. Be sure to review your hard work with other family members – after all, you don't want your hard work to go to waste.