



Getting organized

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Besides your quest to eat healthier, shed pounds and find a new job, the new year has brought up this hankering for organization. If your cluttered bookshelves and disorganized inbox are even more distracting and unbearable than before, you're not alone. "[Get organized] is one of the top five New Year's resolutions," says Laura Leist, president of the National Association of Professional Organizers (www.napo.net) and the founder of organizing firm Eliminate Chaos (www.eliminatechaos.com). To help you stick to your resolution this year, Leist offers up some helpful tips.

Schedule it in: "First and foremost, you have to make time to be organized," says Leist. "A lot of people say they will get organized some day, but some day may never come. If [you want to] live in an organized home and not feel stressed and overwhelmed all the time — which are causes of disorganization — it's absolutely a priority that you make the time."

Stop clutter before it enters your home: "I encourage my clients to really think about stuff before they buy it," says Leist. "Don't just buy something to have it; make sure you have a place for it in your home and you're going to love wearing it."

Focus, man: "Stay focused and don't take your attention off of what it is you are trying to accomplish," says Leist. A scenario to avoid: Say you are sorting through paper work you are trying to file, and you run across a bill. Instead of saying, "I'm going to do this when I'm done," you jump on your computer and pay the bills and then you are on Facebook. "You have to resist the temptation to do more than that one thing," warns Leist. If this is too hard, try manageable chunks, 15-20 minutes at a time.

Tackle one mess at a time: "If you are setting out to organize your home you need to pick one area and go through the various steps so that you have that feeling of accomplishment: 'OK, this wasn't that hard, I can do this,'" says Leist.

Maintenance is essential

"In general, it's like losing weight and keeping that weight off over a period of time. You have to work at this," says Leist. An example of maintenance: "Once you have organized your closet and know where the clothes go, then the laundry doesn't need to sit in the bin — you can put it away," says Leist. On a larger scale, she explains you should look at your closet twice a year to pull out the items you don't wear anymore, then donate those items.