

7 STEPS

TO END YOUR ORGANIZING OVERWHELM



Congratulations! You're on your way to getting your home or office organized!
If you have questions, or need more personalized help, please contact us at the number below.
We are here to help!

BEFORE WE BEGIN...it's important to decide where to start:

- 1 "PAPER" OR "THINGS"?** If paperwork is your top priority, start there but if you want a quick and dramatic visual transformation, choose "Things."
- 2 DECIDE WHICH ROOM TO START WITH.** We recommend choosing the room that's causing you the most heartache. Is it the first room people see when they come to your house? Is it your master bedroom that should serve as a restful haven, but, sadly, doesn't come close? When you choose the room that's stressing you the most, you get double "bang for your buck" – that room gets organized AND your sense of relief will translate into new hope, more motivation, and more energy.

I'm going to organize my: PAPER THINGS (choose one)

My first organizing target (room) is: _____

Now go to the 7 Steps for either "PAPER" or "THINGS"

NOW, LET'S GET STARTED!

7 STEP SYSTEM FOR THINGS



EVERY item in your home should have a designated place. This way you can find anything you need, and it keeps your home CLUTTER-FREE, STRESS-FREE, and GUEST-READY! If you have trouble getting rid of things, you're going to love this system. We call it the "Back-Door" method of organizing because it doesn't rely on letting things go, but it still gets you organized!

There are 2 basic ways to organize:

- **THE STRESSFUL METHOD - PARE THINGS DOWN**

A lot of people have trouble with this method, or get hung up here and never really get to the point where they can implement the second method. The good news is that you can skip this stressful method and go right to more important method:

- **BACK DOOR METHOD - "AUTHENTIC ORGANIZING"**

Put like items with like with this one twist: A place for everything and everything in its ONE place. You've just reduced the chaos of 2,000 crazy-making items in a room to 10 to 15 simple, distinct categories.

1 DESIGN YOUR VISION.

What bothers you about the "Things" in the room you're starting with?

What is your vision for this room?

REFER TO THESE ANSWERS IF YOU LOSE FOCUS OR MOTIVATION!

2 GET READY. Buy or gather these basic supplies:

- 40 to 60 file boxes, such as Office Depot # 287154 or #351984
- Avery 4 x 2 in. removable labels, such as Office Depot # 112755
- Sterilite 6 qt. shoebox-size tote, such as Target # 002-02-0855
- Trash bags
- A few old boxes or shopping bags for items to donate
- Fine-point marker and / or labelmaker

3 ROUND THE ROOM - QUICK SORT (FIRST PASS)

- Construct and line up 10 cardboard file boxes without their lids. Grab two trash bags - one for trash and one for recycling.
- Label one box “**IMPORTANT.**” This is for crucial items that cannot be hidden for even a minute: medications, TV remotes, eyeglasses, keys, checkbooks, obvious vital documents, etc. You will have easy access to these items for the entire project.
- Working “round the room,” put every item that is not in its best home into a box **BY CATEGORY** (Clothes, Bathroom, Tools & Hardware, Electronics, Papers, Books, Toys & Games, etc). It’s best to start with the floor and what’s visible on top of furniture before venturing into drawers, cabinets and closets. If an item is too large for a box, consider it “Oversize” and just place it near its category box. *The goal of this phase is to get every item in a box as fast as possible, leaving enough time to do the 2nd and 3rd passes at length.*
- If you fill a box, put a lid on it and stack another empty box on top to continue with the same category.
- You can label the boxes with the removable labels at the beginning or end of this segment.



IMPORTANT:

Do NOT leave the room to get similar items or put things away!

If you come across papers, photos or catalogs, do NOT read or identify them, even to throw them out – just put them in a box marked “Papers” to handle later when you’re specifically focusing on paperwork. (See “7 Step System for Papers.”)

PRO TIPS:

- A few categories you may not have thought of: Gifts, Organizing Supplies (bags, boxes, trays, hooks), Errands, Decor, Office Supplies, Books and Magazines, Media (CDs, DVDs, etc.)
- Keep an old box or shopping bag for items you’re absolutely sure you’d like to donate, but if there’s ANY hesitation at all, just put them in a box by their category. The goal in this round is to get everything categorized as quickly as possible so you’ll have ample time in the next rounds to more easily make any agonizing decisions.

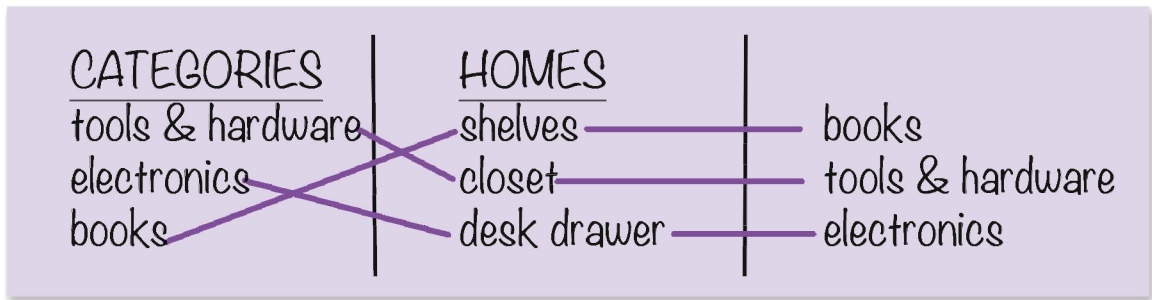
4 ROUND THE ROOM - FINE TUNE (SECOND PASS)

- Go Round the Room again, but this time **WITHIN** each category (except for Papers, which we’ll still handle later when you’re specifically focusing on paperwork.)
- Look at each item within a category, sorting into subcategories for items that will stay in the room. For example, if you’re organizing the bathroom, you can make subcategories for Dental Care, Nail Care, Shaving, etc. These can be sorted into file boxes, lids or the plastic shoe boxes.

Donating items will be easier in this round because you’ll see everything you own within a category (for that room.) When you see the eight eggbeaters you didn’t realize you had, all together in one place, it may be easier to part with one or two of them! Even so, if you can’t make up your mind, don’t worry – the stress-free, simple default is to save the item.

5 MAP, MATCH & MOVE (THIRD PASS)

- Make a list with 3 columns:
- List your Categories on the left hand side
- List your Receiving Places, or Homes (shelves, cabinets, drawers, closets), for that room only, in the middle.
- Draw lines from the left column to the middle until each category has a home.
- Transfer the left column to the right by location so you can clearly see which Categories go in which Homes.
- Note Categories that should go to another room at the end.



Now move the items that are staying in the room, category by category, to their new homes.

Not everything will fit perfectly at this point. You may need to contain, nest or stack some items, but you should be able to get a feel for how much space you need to find or “make” to accommodate your things.

You may need to do some further subcategorizing and / or donating.

Take the trash and recycle outside and take the Donate items to your car or directly to the charity.

FOR ITEMS THAT BELONG IN ANOTHER ROOM, move the box to that room if it will just take 10 minutes to put the items away. If not, this is what we call “Limbo Living” – you’ll have a few things that don’t yet have a home that’s ready for them. These items can live temporarily in the new room they belong in, or you can keep them in the room you’re currently working on, as far out of the way as possible, staged and ready to be unpacked when you specifically focus on organizing the other room.

6 FINISHING TOUCHES - SHOPPING

- Reward yourself for making it this far by purchasing pretty or useful containers that you will now know fit the items you need to accommodate, for this room only. Take photos and bring drawer and shelf measurements with you.

7 KEEP IT GOING

- It’s amazing how much better this room feels now! Even if it’s not perfect, it’s livable and much easier to do any finishing touches later when you have a few minutes. Protect your investment of time, money and brain cells, by instituting the following 5 routines to keep this room a clutter-free zone. Explain to everyone in your household how these work.

5 ROUTINES TO STAY CLUTTER FREE!

● ZONE INTEGRITY

If paperwork is no longer designated for this room, make it a paper-free zone. If clothing storage is no longer designated for this room, make it a clothing-free zone, etc. Try to make sure these items never even make it into this room. If you have to dump them somewhere, dump them in a room that still has clutter, but keep the integrity of this room “sacred.”

● TRASH AND RECYCLE BASKETS

Provide a trash and recycle bin in or near every room where discardables tend to gather, and empty them at least once a week.

● ACTION AND OUTBOXES

Start a closet, cabinet or shelf for ongoing crucial household Action and “Out-Boxes” – one each for Donate, Errands and Action.

● SET THE TONE

Set the tone for the room by keeping the 3 to 5 main focal points and/or major horizontal surfaces clear. If this is unrealistic for your lifestyle, at least corral the clutter a tray, dish or basket.

● THE SCOOP! (& PUT AWAY)

At the end of every day or week, scoop up all items in the room that are not in their proper homes and dump them into a nice basket, bin or hamper that you keep in the room or close by for just this purpose. Extra points (!) if you then distribute these to their proper homes, but it's OK if you only have time to make this room a clutter-free zone again – you are still light years ahead of where you used to be! From now on, it should take no more than ten minutes to be ready for guests or just for you to enjoy your home.

CONGRATULATIONS!

If you have any questions or need more personalized solutions for a complex or frustrating situation, we offer both virtual and hands-on, on-site organizing help. Call us at 1-800-CLUTTER for a free consultation to meet your needs.



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