

# Basic Organizing Principles

By Ramona Creel

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So you've decided to get organized, but you just don't know where to begin. Here are four basic organizing principles that will help you regain control over your schedule, your environment, and your life:

## CLEAR OUT THE CLUTTER

We suffer from overload in our society -- too much stuff, too many obligations, too much information... Clearing out the clutter means getting rid of ANYTHING that is extraneous and unnecessary. Clutter takes up either TIME, SPACE, ENERGY, or MONEY without providing you any benefit. You can find clutter in many places -- relationships (people who don't support your goals and drag you down), finances (wasteful spending patterns), physical space (possessions you have no real use for), schedule (interruptions / time wasters), and emotions (guilt / jealousy / unrealistic expectations) Make a plan to clear out the clutter in each of these areas, one at a time.

## HAVE A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING

What is the number one reason for physical clutter? Most people don't have a set place for things. Your belongings are a lot more likely to end up back where they belong if there is a clearly designated storage area for them. Clear storage containers and labels are the best way of insuring things end up back in the right spot. Also, use the following principles when looking critically at your storage:

- store items nearest where they are used
- keep like items grouped together
- keep climatic concerns in mind
- make often-used items more accessible

## DEVELOP SYSTEMS

You can go about your daily activities in one of two ways. You can either do things in a "random manner," meaning you have to spend time deciding how to do the activity every time you do it. Or, you can work "systematically," where you have a set way of doing things each time. This can apply to any activity -- cleaning the house, buying groceries, preparing a report for work... When you work

systematically, you don't have to put a lot of energy into deciding how to do something. That part becomes second-nature. Your time and effort is focused on completing the task, and finish much more quickly.

## REVIEW AND REVISE YOUR SYSTEMS

Setting up a system is a wonderful step toward becoming better organized. However, if you are using the same systems you put in place 10 years ago, chances are they aren't meeting your needs as well as they used to be. Every few months, you should ask yourself these simple questions about your daily routine tasks:

- Does this job even need to be done? (don't let "busywork" fill your day)
- Does this job need to be done by me? (learn to delegate!)
- Is this the most efficient way to do this job? (is there a quicker, easier way to do this?)

With these basic organizing principles, you can tackle any type of clutter at home or at work -- good luck!

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