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Getting Organized

An e-newsletter of organizing tips for faculty members. March 2005.

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"When you find yourself in a hole, stop digging."

--Will Rogers

Getting Things Done by David Allen

Spring Fever & Organizing

Spring has arrived. It's time to blow off the winter cobwebs and spruce up your home and office. I have some quick organizing tips that will put a little spring into your step. So many people tell me how they want to do some organizing in their homes, but it's difficult when a lovely spring day beckons.

So to help your spring fever, I've designed some organizing quick fixes. You can spend one hour working on one room, and then head out to enjoy your day feeling like you've made some progress.

As Donna Smallin says in her book *The One-Minute Organizer*:

"Trying to organize your entire home in a day is like trying to eat an entire piece of cake in one bite. You'd choke. Work on organizing projects in small chunks."

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Medicine Cabinets & Make-up Drawers

It's time to toss out:

- Expired prescription and over-the-counter medications
- Sunscreen that's over a year old
- Make-up over a year old or that you don't use anymore
- Old toothbrushes
 - The bristles aren't supposed to be smashed out to the side.
- Anything that has changed in color, texture, or smell or that you don't use
- Brushes and combs with missing bristles and teeth, and ponytail holders that looked frayed

It might be a good idea to:

- Retire frayed towels and washcloths to the rag bin
- Wash your make-up brushes with shampoo
 - Let them air dry to avoid breakouts and bacterial infections.
- Donate your old eyeglasses to the Lions Club
 - They have donation boxes in some grocery stores and optometrists' offices.

The Closet

It's time to toss out:

- Torn, worn, misshapened, or stained clothing that's beyond repair
- Socks with missing mates
- Worn-out shoes

It might be a good idea to:

- Clean coats before putting them away for the summer
- Sew on any loose or missing buttons
 - Take clothes to a tailor for hemming or repair.
- Give unwanted clothing to charity or put them in consignment shops for extra money
 - Each consignment shop has different guidelines.
- Pack away winter clothes into canvas or plastic containers

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The Living Room

It's time to toss out:

- Old magazines and catalogs
 - Rip out articles you want and toss the rest.
- Electronic cords that go to nothing
- Sofa pillows past their prime
- Unwanted clutter that has collected on the coffee table and endtables

It might be a good idea to:

- Round up all of the remotes in a basket
- Weed out books, CDs, DVDs, or videos you longer want
 - Sell or donate them.
- Worried you have collected too many knickknacks?
 - Box up half of them and rotate the collection on a quarterly basis.
- Wipe down your phone with a pre-moistened cleaning cloth, such as the ones made by Clorox

The Kitchen

It's time to toss out:

- Anything that's melted, burnt, worn, or broken
- Worn or frayed potholders, oven mitts or towels
- Expired food in the pantry, refrigerator, and freezer
- The sponge if you can't remember the last time you replaced it
- Expired coupons

It might be a good idea to:

- Weed out items and gadgets that you never use
- Arrange your pantry so you can see everything you have
- Keep coupons in an envelope or plastic envelope with dividers
- Keep take-out menus and pizza coupons in one place
 - Use a drawer, a binder, or plastic envelope.
- Keep a notepad or marker board so family members can write down items needed from the grocery store
- Tidy up the outside of the refrigerator
 - It's so easy to stop seeing all the papers your magnets are holding up.

- Donate unwanted items or give to college students for their first apartment
- Check the cords on your appliances

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The Bedroom

It's time to toss out:

- Unnecessary papers, catalogs, and clutter on the nightstand
- Worn-out bedding or pillows

It might be a good idea to:

- Make your bedroom a peaceful oasis and limit the clutter
- Clean out the nightstand
 - Keep only the items you need.
- Only keep the book you're reading
 - Put the others away in basket or shelf.

The Kids' Rooms

It's time to toss out:

- Broken toys
- Torn and stained clothing that's beyond repair
- Dried-up markers and broken crayons

It might be a good idea to:

- Keep artwork in a clean pizza box or another container
 - Recycle your art displays with new pictures.
- Round up outgrown clothing to give away
- Label bins with pictures for small children
 - This way they know where their toys go.
- Clean up homework areas
 - Replenish needed supplies and weed out anything that could be a distraction.

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The Paper & Home Office

It's time to toss out:

- Unwanted paper, old calendars, old receipts, and other clutter
- Warranties and owner's manuals for appliances you no longer have
- Bank statements from over seven years ago
 - Shred anything with personal information and account numbers.
- Empty pens and dried-up markers and highlighters
- Business cards you don't need

It might be a good idea to:

- File away this year's tax return
- Shred any old receipts or statements with personal information on them
- Start paying your bills online to save yourself time
- Make a folder for each family member
- Make a travel folder to stash information on places you may want to go
- Store office supplies in one area

- Cash in your spare change
- Use Velcro squares to keep drawer organizers from sliding around each time you open the drawer

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The Garage & Attic

It's time to toss out:

- Anything damaged by water, heat, or rodents
- Broken items that you left in the garage or attic
- Stacks of newspapers
 - Many local schools have recycling bins for paper.
- Unused paint or chemicals you no longer need
 - Check with your city's guidelines on proper disposal of chemicals.
- Broken sports equipment, old garden hoses, and anything rusted

It might be a good idea to:

- Store paper and books in climate-controlled environments
 - Garages or attics are not good choices for storing these kinds of materials, especially in our high-humidity climate.
- Call the charity shops to pick up items you want to donate
- Use plastic containers instead of paper ones to store items in the garage or attic
- Use jars or bins to keep screws, bolts, and nails organized
- Stash paint, fertilizer and other chemicals away from children and heat sources
- Create zones in your garage
 - Round up all the sports equipment in one area, gardening items in another, etc.
- Use nails or hooks to hang brooms, garden supplies, or holiday wreaths on the walls

The Utility Room

It's time to toss out:

- Rags and sponges past their prime
- Old detergents or cleaners that have changed in texture or color
 - Fabric softener shouldn't be lumpy.

It would be a good idea to:

- Run a wash cycle with only hot water and bleach to kill any germs
- Inventory and clean out your cleaning supplies

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The Garden

It's time to toss out:

- Weeds and any winter die back
- Opened bags of fertilizer that you're not going to use
 - Remember to dispose of them properly.
- Winter annual color flowers and plants
 - So you can plant spring color.
- Broken or warped lawn furniture, flower pots, and other lawn decorations
- Piled up bricks or lumber that you're not going to use
 - You can always give away these items to someone who will use them.

It would be a good idea to:

- Sharpen your lawn mower blades, shears, and clippers
- Drain "old" fuel from your lawn equipment and start the season with fresh fuel
→ Check the spark plugs, air filters, and other safety features.
- Start a compost pile with your garden refuse
- Mulch your planting beds
- Fertilize your lawns and ornamentals
- Check your irrigation system

Note: Gardening information provided by Joseph Johnson, Landscape Manager.

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Got Clutter?

I have developed a session on organizing how-to's full of useful tips, hints and other secrets, and I will be happy to visit your department to give you a hands-on presentation, especially geared toward your needs:

- If you prefer a one-on-one session, I can check out those problem spots in your office and help you come up with a solution
- To schedule a presentation or a one-on-one appointment, call (713) 792-8061

Happy Organizing! And Happy Spring!

Janice

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Member -- National Association of Professional Organizers
Member -- National Study Group on Chronic Disorganization

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