





Organize Shmorganize

The Only Book You'll Ever
Need... To Get Organized

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Dedication

*For my parents, Timothy and Deborah
Bantle, who have proved to be
life's biggest and best cheerleaders.
You have inspired me to pursue excellence and
given me courage to chase after my purpose.*



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He is a champion and cut above the rest.

This book would not be in your
hands were it not for him.



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Why “Shmorganize”?

Although you love saying it, you may be curious as to why I chose a word that doesn't exist for the title. Well, here's the truth. The title is what most people think of organization. Am I right? Organize ... shmorganize. “Shmorganize” has a slightly sarcastic tone. It is an indication of most people's experience of organization. They have tried to be organized, tried to de-clutter, and have failed. So the natural reaction is to doubt whether the concept of organizing even works. Organize shmorganize.

I am guessing that is why you picked up this book. Maybe I am too forward to come out and say such a statement, but since I am not looking you in the eye, I really have no remorse.

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Organize shmorganize. In thirty minutes you will feel differently about organization, and sarcasm will be old news. Here's to you and the areas of your home that are about to change!

(P.S. I guess "shmorganize" is now an official word.)



Why Another Book on Organization?

Aren't there a thousand books on this subject already? That's what I thought until I did some research. A lot of books exist about organization, but none are concise and simple for the typical unorganized person. With so much to do and barely a second to breathe, is there time to read a book the size of your local yellow pages about getting organized?

I know your time and patience on the topic of organization is limited. I have made this book simple, straightforward, and functional. I understand you are not trying to run the same household as the Von Traps from *The Sound of Music*. You are hoping to get at least one area de-cluttered and organized. With this easy read, you

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will be educated, entertained, and motivated to change at least one area in your home. I have included the top 20% of organizational tips, which will get your home and life 80% of the way to being completely organized.

First, we'll explore the basic concepts of organization. These can be used anywhere. Then, we'll move on to the best tips for each room in the house. This will make it easy to read now and a great reference tool in the future.

The information in this book is home changing, mind changing, and therefore, life changing. Put it in your car and read a snippet at a red light (if you hear honking, you've read too long). Carry it in your briefcase or purse and read a page while waiting for a meeting. Or keep it in your bathroom (no need to elaborate on this one). Make a habit of one nugget in this book, or make a habit of it all. This book is efficient and practical, and just what you've been waiting for. Of course, I am biased, but I know what is in this book and how powerful it can be, if applied to your life.

Enjoy your journey of organization!

The Psychology of Stuff

The psychology of having stuff

Before we can learn to organize our stuff, we need to determine why we have it. This will make it much easier to dispose of things and organize what we still use. Plain and simple, we need stuff to live. We require clothes, food, and shelter.

Recently our culture has moved from being content with the essentials to accumulating mass amounts of stuff, or even worse, developing a pack rat mentality. By “pack rat,” I mean storing large amounts of stuff that may or may not ever be used. I know you have been to *that* person’s house. You know, the one who has boxes stacked up in the corner, small usable walking paths through the house, and a ten-year supply of 9-volt batteries. Why do they have all that stuff? There are many reasons, and for a bit of

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perspective, we will cover a few here. Understanding why people store tons of stuff will be a key in understanding yourself and will give you your most powerful tool of organization: the proper mind-set toward what you have, what you don't, and where it all should go.

Here are some of the top reasons people have stuff:

1. People love to shop! Many people aren't paying attention to all they already own when they head out the door. They love the actual process of walking through aisles, scoping out the newest product, getting a bargain, or finding some item that would make their life more enjoyable. They love the element of surprise that awaits them around every corner. Many of the so-called "pack rats" just love to shop!

2. Many people believe their self-worth is wrapped up in possessions. They believe their value is derived from wearing name brand clothing, driving a classy vehicle, or living in an upscale community. The desire to increase self-esteem often leads to purchasing unnecessary items.

3. We want to be able to shape a person's view of us by our possessions. What we have can be used to project an image. We use clothes, cars, houses, and jewelry to show others the person we want them to see when they look at us.

4. We also acquire possessions as we develop new hobbies and interests throughout our life. Life has cycles and seasons that bring new equipment, instruments, clothing, and gear.

5. We keep things that are of good use, even if we aren't actually using them. Everyone has that item in their home they can't stand to get rid of because they know how much they wanted it at one time, how long they waited for it, and how much they paid because of that darned infomercial! We need to come to an understanding that just because something has value doesn't mean it needs to stay in our house.

6. If there is an empty space, we feel the need to fill it. We are so used to having stuff, and a lot of it, that when we take something away, it does not look right. It looks empty and boring. We like the homey feel rather than the hospital look.

7. Lastly, people have tons of stuff in their lives because of laziness! That sounds really offensive. Let me try again with a little more kindness. What I meant to say was this: due to a lack of motivation, time, and energy to clean up and clean out, people collect tons of stuff. Better? Good. We can still be friends. I don't want to lose you this early in the book, but really ... it's laziness.

Before you panic completely, you do not have to go to the extreme of getting rid of all your stuff. I'm not

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condemning you for what you have in your house (although if you identified with anything in the list your conscience may be pestering you)! This information will help you sort through how you have acquired things, why you have held onto stuff for years, and what you should hang onto for the future. Many of the things you have in your house you're not currently using. They were a stepping-stone to the person you are today. Acknowledging new phases and interests in your life will help you sort through what you still need and what you are able to give away.

Who knows, with a little organization, you may just get around to accomplishing those projects and hobbies you have put off for years! (I must confess, I just finished scrapbooking my honeymoon ... that was five years ago.)

Basics of Organization

1. Think minimally

This is not to be confused with minimal thinking! Organization takes a lot of thought initially. If you are truly interested in making organization a priority in your life, you will most likely need to change your mind-set. Decide to want less than you currently have. This sets a foundation for being able to get rid of useless stuff that creates clutter and takes away space.

You aren't using everything you have in your house right now. (I know this is true because you can't remember where you put the snorkeling gear from your Florida vacation two years ago.) Everyone has too much stuff, you included. Get focused on the bare necessities of what

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you need to live on. Without a doubt, this is foundational to getting organized.

2. Lessen your options

What is it that possesses us to have three kinds of shampoo and conditioner, two bars of soap, and two bottles of body wash in our shower? Shouldn't one be enough? There are just too many options available in your pantries, refrigerators, closets, and showers.

Think about it ... Every time you open up one of these doors, you put yourself through the same decision-making hassle! Every day this happens! Eliminate this pointless decision-making time by only purchasing your favorite foods (healthy choices please), toiletries, clothes, and household items. If you keep only your favorite things stocked in manageable amounts, you will have less to think about daily. So find your favorite in every category and keep it stocked. (Don't let your kids use this principle on you regarding eliminating all spinach or broccoli!)

If you cut back on these routine decisions, you will have extra time for things that are more important.

3. Give everything a home

Once you lessen your options by keeping only your favorites, it will inevitably free up space. Now you can create a specific spot for all your essential stuff. Make

sure every item in your home has a place. (Possible places should not include the center of your bedroom floor, the front porch, or the kitchen counter.) How can anyone put something away when it doesn't have a place to be that's "away"? If there is not a place for an item, then reconsider what is truly a necessity in your home and get rid of something you don't use at least once a month.

A "home" is any logical location for an item. For example, you keep your shampoo and conditioner in the shower because that is where they are used and where there is space. Many people keep their bathroom cleaning supplies underneath the kitchen sink. This is not a logical location, since cleaning the bathroom requires transportation of cleaning products, making it seem more like a bathroom remodeling project than a quick cleaning. Another example would be keeping your blender on the kitchen counter when it is used once every three months. Instead, store it in a cupboard, pantry, or on a basement shelf and retrieve it when it is needed. Do not take up counter space on a daily basis when it is not necessary.

Keep items in the room they are used, if possible. Items should only be visible when they are used daily. Store items in the basement or closet if they are only used once a month. This will give you more living space to use on a daily basis. Once you have evaluated what is truly a necessity, you will have fewer items to place in your home,

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and the task of finding a home for all your things will not seem so overwhelming.

4. Make regular trips to the thrift store

Another basic organization tip is to have a specific “drop spot” in your garage or basement that is designated for donations to the local thrift store. For me, it’s in the corner of my garage. Whenever I come across stuff I want to get rid of, I simply take it to the drop spot. When the pile gets big enough to notice, I throw it in my car trunk and head off to the nearest thrift store. It’s a win for everyone! It gets clutter out of the house and makes it available at an affordable price for someone who may truly need it (although it is probably best to simply dispose of the 23 year-old ice cube trays).

5. Maximize your routine

While covering the basics of organization, I cannot neglect the significance of assessing your daily routine to find wasted minutes. These minutes could be used for something of higher importance, or something that’s just plain old more fun!

Over time, most of us develop a daily routine. This is particularly noticeable in the morning and at night. Maybe you’re just realizing that all those things you repeat day after day, month after month are your “routine.”

There's nothing wrong with having a routine; in fact, an efficient routine can be helpful. If you start the day off with a concise plan and clear purpose, you are less likely to be stressed getting out the door. (And who isn't looking for a little less stress?) So take a closer look at how your morning plays out—drink coffee, take shower, eat breakfast, read the paper, check e-mail, do a load of laundry—and arrange it efficiently.

As I mentioned earlier, having fewer options to choose from will help your morning routine. Fewer decisions to make means you have not wasted time thinking! I find the best mornings are when I have everything already decided the evening before. In the morning, I set myself on autopilot to accomplish my tasks with ease, and everyone is smiling when we walk out the door!

Everyone has different responsibilities and schedules, so figure out what works best to make your daily routine function on autopilot for an easy exit out the door.

6. Use technology as convenience, *not* an obligation

Organization is not limited to organizing things. It is about organizing your thoughts, your schedule, and even your priorities.

Many people are constantly using their cell phones. If we are going to live a life of organization (or even a

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life attempting organization), we need to set the record straight on technology. The phone is designed for *your* convenience. You don't actually have to answer every time the phone rings (sings, rattles, or quacks). You don't even have to have your phone on all day. (Mr. Blackberry is included here.) There are times when we need a break. Don't feel guilty about ignoring some calls and shutting the phone off when you need a mental break. The same is true with e-mail, Facebook, and other social networking sites, like Twitter. (Do we even care to know that you just clipped your toenails?) These are tools designed for *your* use and convenience. More and more they are robbing people of time and brain cells, piling on heaps of guilt if things aren't taken care of in a "timely" manner. Turn off your ringer/singer when you are trying to get something accomplished, and don't allow unnecessary interruptions. Another way to use your phone to your advantage is to turn it off and use it as motivation to finish a task. Once the task is complete, call a friend and share your accomplishments!

7. Have your family help

"Humph. Yeah, right. What? *My* family?" I hear you muttering under your breath. (Hold the profanities) But here is the deal: You are not superhuman. You have the right and responsibility to seek the help of your family.

Basics of Organization

Everyone is busy, but “many hands make light work.” Sharing responsibility frees up time to do the things that are truly important to everyone. When it comes to your kids, they need to understand what being part of a family entails. There is absolutely no reason one person should carry the entire workload of household chores when there are many capable hands to help. Changing the habits of a family includes some training, patience, consistency, and praise. Consistent reinforcement will need to take place, but the rewards are outstanding!

For example, each person should clear his or her plate from the table after every meal. Everyone should put their clothes in a dirty clothes hamper. Everyone should pull up the covers upon exiting the bed. If you accomplish these three things in your household, you will have no more dishes sitting on the kitchen table, no more dirty clothes on the floor, and every bed will be “made” (well, sort of) every morning.

That covers the basics of organization. Ready to organize your house room by room? I sense hesitation ... Keep reading and see what sparks your interest.



Help in the Kitchen... and I Don't Mean a Personal Chef

Clean up ASAP after dinner

Are you sick of waking up to dirty dishes in the sink and on the table? Regardless of how you feel after dinner, focus for 15 minutes on cleaning up the dinner dishes. Waiting to clean up the dishes creates dread and lets food harden so the process of scrubbing the pans becomes difficult and more time-consuming. If you have a dishwasher, you will only need 10 minutes. Cleaning up your pots and pans right after cooking saves time in the end because the leftover gunk is still gooey and will wash off easily. If you wait an hour, you will be using a chisel to

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get the mac and cheese off the pan. (Makes you wonder what it does to *our* insides!)

Organizing the kitchen

As you strive to get things organized and systematic in the kitchen, you will need to remember to keep only what you need and use. Once you have rid your cupboards of the unnecessary things, move on to the next step. Keep all categories of items in one location. Keep your glasses with other glasses, coffee cups, and mugs. Keep your plates and bowls together. Keep your serving dishes together. Keep your pots and pans together. Keep your cleaning supplies in one location. Have one utensil drawer for daily use and another drawer for cooking and baking utensils. If drawer space is an issue, try this: my mom always uses a nice-looking pitcher on the counter to store wooden spoons, serving spoons, whisks, and spatulas.

While you're categorizing, do everyone a favor and keep things logical. Store glasses near the sink so it's convenient to get a drink of water. Or maybe your family uses the water spout on the refrigerator? In that case, store the glasses near the refrigerator so it's efficient to get water there, or to get something out of the fridge.

Keep dishes near the dishwasher

One more bit of logic for organizing your kitchen. Store your plates and bowls near the dishwasher. Most often they come out of the cupboard to be used near the dishwasher and sink. Once they are used (and cleared of course), they will be put into the dishwasher. Once clean, they will return to the cupboard once more. Eliminating unnecessary trips across the kitchen can save so much time.

Fronting and rotating stock

If you find yourself with a full refrigerator because you have a large family or a family with diverse eating styles, this tip should help keep the green fuzz to a minimum. Place newly purchased items behind the older ones. This keeps a nice cycle going. If you won't eat the "old" item because it seems too old, throw it away so someone else doesn't have to discover the sour milk. The process of putting the newly purchased items behind older items is a little more time-consuming up front, but this tip will save you a lot of money. I cannot tell you how many people (myself included) forget what is in the back of their fridge and neglect to use it before it expires. If you rotate your stock accordingly, you will save on your grocery bill for sure!

Make a meal plan

What a time and energy saver this tip is! There isn't a person who wants to think about dinner after working all day, not knowing what's in the cupboards. Save yourself the hassle by making a meal plan. Start with writing 14 meals down; pick favorites and healthy balanced dinners that are easy to assemble. Don't worry; you are not trying to be Martha Stewart here. You are trying to get a healthy, likeable dinner on the table without losing your sanity. Keep this list of 14 meals and rotate it. You will be thrilled with all the stress you have eliminated by having this list!

Have a running grocery list

Once you have your 14-day meal plan, you should be ready to make a grocery list. I am very careful not to send my husband to the store without a specific list. If he doesn't have a list, he buys whatever looks tasty and fun. We end up with several items we don't need and spend more money than necessary. (He jokingly tells me the extra fun food is his "tip" for going to the store!)

Now, if I go to the store without a list, I don't often purchase unnecessary items, but I also don't remember what I went to the store to buy. So I spend way more time driving my squeaky-wheeled shopping cart through

Help in the Kitchen... and I Don't Mean a Personal Chef

the aisles, trying to remember what I really did need. Big waste of time and energy!

Never go to the grocery store without a list! Why would you put yourself through the mental gymnastics to remember everything?

Start your list with the basic items you use every morning, then add any items you need for packing lunches, and then take out your meal plan and see what items you need to put the meal plan in motion. Bam! This will save you money and time at the grocery store. I find it helpful to keep this list easily accessible so everyone can add to it as they find items that need to be purchased. Your refrigerator is a great location for this list. If there is space between all the magnets and pictures!

Use extras/pantry stock

The next free Saturday morning you have (3 months from now), take an inventory of all the extra food in your pantry and cupboards. Visit the Web sites www.recipekey.com or www.recipematcher.com, which will spit back meals and recipes after you enter all of the overstocked items in your cupboards. You bought the stuff; now use it up! It will save on your grocery bill for the next few weeks, and you will already have your meal plan set.



Help in the Office... and I Don't Mean an Administrative Assistant

Touch mail only once

Touch mail only once. Don't set it down on the kitchen table, then on the counter, then on the desk, and then finally sort through it. This can be a waste of time and thought. Plus it increases the likelihood it will get lost! Handle it once and be done with it!

We have all walked into a room in our house where a pile of mail has been collecting for several days. The dread of sorting through it is overwhelming, which prolongs us leaving it there, piling on more mail, until finally the mail pile is so big it will not even stay stacked! We begin the

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task of going through each envelope and catalog. Finally, the heaping mound is gone. Well, gone until tomorrow, when we fall into the same trap of plopping down the mail where a new mountain will soon begin to grow.

Begin sorting mail on your walk back from the mailbox. As soon as you walk in the house, throw the junk mail and unwanted catalogs in the trash or recycling bin, then open every bill and throw away the envelope. Read any letters from friends or family. Take bills and necessary items into the office and put them in their “home.”

A thought about throwing away catalogs: if you really needed an item, you would be out shopping for it, not getting your mail. So there is clearly not a need to let them accumulate. You are trying to get rid of stuff anyway, so don't bother saving catalogs to look through. If this is hard at first, try going online to browse your way out of a panic attack. Everything there is just a few clicks away!

If you have a large family and are wondering how to keep everything organized, you may consider an inside mail slot for every person. You can label a slot with each person's name, and as soon as you arrive in the house with the mail, slide the appropriate mail in each slot. This eliminates piles and ensures everyone receives their mail. In case the question has entered your mind, you can wait on labeling a mail slot for your two-year-old until he or she reaches junior high.

In/out bin for spouses

Not only is it difficult to stay organized with mail and other necessary papers, but also staying on top of communicating with your family members can prove to be a big challenge these days. This idea will help the communication as well as paper organization. ©

Purchase or use a little box, file folder, drawer ... or anything functional as a tool of communication between you and your spouse. (If you're the right type, a five-gallon bucket or cardboard box will work just fine.) This will be your landing pad for all paper information. This information could include anything, but most likely will be things like tickets, receipts, letters from friends, cards, documents in need of signatures, notes as reminders to discuss a certain subject, bills, or reminders for events. Anything.

In our office I have a small decorative box. If anything arrives for me while I'm out, my husband places it in the box and leaves the top open so I know there's a change of material. It is my responsibility to look and see what has entered and take care of it. I suggest having one person as the "manager" of this file.

Keeping a calendar—use Google and sync with everyone in your family

Do you feel overwhelmed with all that goes on in your family and feel as if it is impossible to coordinate your daily schedule? (I hear sighs and moans.) The Internet has a ton of solutions. It has many excellent communication tools with the click of a button. One of my favorites is Google. You can check e-mail, save pictures, store documents, create financial templates, and have your calendar in sync with your spouse's work appointments, children's school and sports schedules, grandkids' special events, church socials, and women's book club in 3 seconds. Simple! And for those of you with lots of children, you can color code everything a different color for each child! Sign up for a free e-mail account with Google, and all these things are yours. Once you set up a calendar, you can follow prompts to find other calendars in the Google network and sync them with yours. You may literally end up "on the same page" after all.

If you're not handy with the computer and don't plan to be, there is another option. Purchase a white board calendar with magnetic strips to keep on the refrigerator. They come in all sizes and styles at your local department store. This kind of calendar eliminates the need to be on the Internet and still allows everyone to have access to the family agenda.

Designate a “remember me” pile

Over the course of a week, 4 out of 7 days you need to remember to take something out the door with you when you leave in the morning. How often do you actually remember? And consider the growing frustration while you are crunched for time, trying to remember what it is you need to take with you, and then once you remember the item, remembering where you put it!

Here is a simple solution! Designate a spot near the entrance/exit of your home to be a “remember me” spot. So let's say it is Thursday and you need to remember to return your friend's 13x9 pan to church Sunday. Do not put it away. Experience says you will never remember it. Out of sight, out of mind. Place it in your remember me pile. Pretty soon this will be a location you look every time you leave the house. Once you place an item there, you will only have to think of it once, and as you walk out the door, it's a fail-proof reminder of what needs to go with you. This way you will not be known as the person who always keeps things longer than he or she should! We all have *that* friend who forgets to bring back our favorite movie or shirt. Admit it. You are almost fed up enough to drive over to that friend's house to get your stuff back! Do not be *that* friend! People will be more willing to loan you things if you return them promptly.



Help in the Living Room... and I Don't Mean Feng Shui

The five-minute tidy up

My mom receives the credit for this tip. She was so casual about it that I didn't notice her routine until well into my teens. Sometimes I even saw her with a toothbrush hanging out of her mouth while tossing pillows and folding blankets!

Every night before you head to bed, take 5 minutes to tidy up around the living room. This is not organizing, cleaning, or starting any kind of project. You will not need to get out any cleaning products. Rather, put the pillows on the sofa; fold any blankets and put them in their place; turn off any lights and electronics; put toys,

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DVDs, schoolbooks, and other “stuff” in their homes, and collect dishes and put them in the dishwasher or sink. Done. Not hard. Not impossible. When you wake up in the morning and walk down to see a “clean” living room, you will be constantly motivated to do this 5-minute tidy up every night of your life.

Designated toy area

For those of you who have kids and toys aplenty, it helps if there is a designated toy bin located in your living room. You cannot blame your kids for trailing their belongings throughout the house; they are only following your example. (Sorry, was that too harsh?)

Make it simple for your kids to clean up by putting a large bin in the living room or in whatever rooms the majority of their toys are kept. They can throw all their toys in there (literally), and it will look clean. They will love how easy it is, and you will love that you are not always picking up toys. I am sure the bin could double as a pirate ship, submarine, or fort at some point too.

Designated technology area

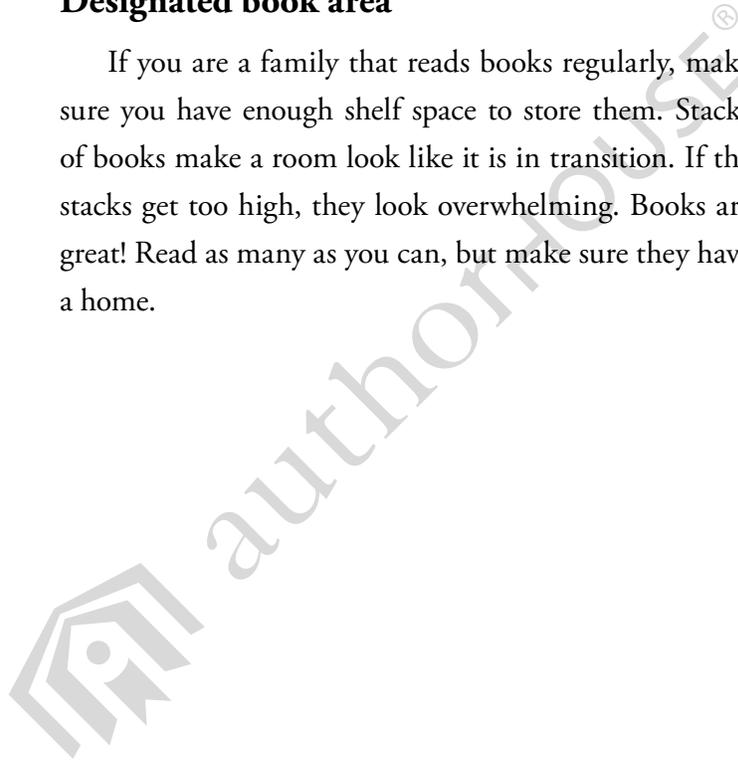
Your kids are not the only ones with toys. You also have gadgets and games that need a home. Make sure you have a cubby in your entertainment center that can become the landing pad for any cords, controllers, video-

Help in the Living Room... and I Don't Mean Feng Shui

game equipment, and any other technology gadgets. Have a place to store DVDs and organize your video games. Cords from electronic equipment scream chaos. Hide them!

Designated book area

If you are a family that reads books regularly, make sure you have enough shelf space to store them. Stacks of books make a room look like it is in transition. If the stacks get too high, they look overwhelming. Books are great! Read as many as you can, but make sure they have a home.





Help in the Bathroom... and I Don't Mean Fiber

Hamper in the bathroom

Chances are your spouse and kids de-clothe themselves in the bathroom before they shower or bathe (and if not ...). This means every day several sets of dirty clothes accumulate in your bathroom. Catch the clutter before it happens by placing a clothes hamper in the bathroom. It does not make sense for everyone to pick up their pile of dirty clothes, carry it to their bedroom, hope the clothes make it into each person's individual hamper, and then expect Ms. (or Mr.) Laundry Fairy to float from room to room gathering up dirty clothes. Have a central dropping

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point for dirty clothes in the main bathroom and be done with it!

Bath towel hooks for everyone

If there are not enough towel racks, you can definitely expect bath towels on the floor (or if you neglect to put a clothes hamper in there). Racks can take up a lot of space. A simple space-saving solution is to replace old racks with hooks and have one for each person in the house. Designate a hook for every person in your family, and you might even be able to see the bathroom floor after everyone has been in there for their morning routine.

Baby bath towels

It *seems* logical for adults to use a large bath towel ... our bodies are naturally bigger. Because children are smaller, I highly recommend using hand towels for babies and kids. This will save space in your closet, and you will have fewer loads of laundry to do! You can change the name to baby bath towels if you feel better about it. This is a small change with large impact.

Shorter showers

Long showers have become a luxury to many Americans. The average shower is around 10 minutes long.

Help in the Bathroom... and I Don't Mean Fiber

This was from a random Internet survey. Suspiciously, I had a difficult time finding any real data on this. If we compare the time it takes to wash our hands and multiply that time by how much bigger our bodies are than our hands, and then add in applying shampoo, conditioner, and shaving, I still can't figure out where the extra minutes go. Singing? Meditation? Therapy?

These are all very good things, but every now and then we would do well to get on with our lives and make more efficient use of time. Here's an idea: if you absolutely have to stand in the shower for a long time, make yourself useful by keeping a sponge in the shower to scrub down the tub. Who said cleaning can't be relaxing and fun!?! Okay, it never really is (except to the wacko clean freaks), but this is as close as you're going to get to cleaning and fun.

After your shower, you may also find it very helpful to take a washcloth and wipe down the sink and toilet daily. A woman I worked for while in college used the phrase "once over" to refer to this quick cleaning. It only takes 30 seconds and keeps the bathroom looking clean. This is especially helpful after the kids' morning routine!



Help in the Bedroom... and I Don't Mean, Well... You Know

Make your bed daily

Every day, the last person out of bed should be responsible for pulling up the bed sheets and covers over the pillows, with no tidal wave wrinkles. This will transform your bedroom and can even qualify as “making the bed.” Ditch the 27 bed pillows you keep on the floor in preparation for the one day of the week you happen to really make the bed. Keep one or two for hope, and give the rest to the thrift store. You will gain free floor space this way.

Beware of flat surfaces

Flat surfaces collect things. (Think of dashboards, car seats, countertops, dining room tables, and window sills.) That is their function. You should not keep any unnecessary chair, bench, desk, or treadmill in your bedroom because these items pose the danger of collecting clutter. Dresser surfaces are difficult enough to keep clutter free, so do not invite accumulating piles of clothing or other items to rest on any piece of furniture.

Permanent gym bag

If you are a gym goer, you understand the daily monotonous routine of packing and unpacking your gym bag. May I suggest that you keep a gym bag permanently stocked with your toiletries? Yes, this means you will own two sets of makeup, two sets of shampoo and conditioner, and two bottles of body wash. However, you will save time every day by not pinballing these items back and forth between the bathroom and your gym bag. Also, keep a pair of sneakers in your gym bag so you never forget them on your way out the door in the morning.

Keep only the clothes you love and feel great in!

If you have a dresser or closet overflowing with clothes, this tip is especially for you! Ask yourself a question: Do you love the shirt you're wearing this minute? No? Then get rid of it! Open your closet with this question in mind and evaluate every item in there. Ask, "Do I love this item of clothing?" If you can't say a hearty "yes," then say good-bye and put it in your thrift store drop spot. Life is too short to wear clothes you do not like or that do not fit. (I am officially giving you permission to get rid of the ugly sweater from Aunt Millie.) Most of us wear the same 5 to 10 items of clothing every day of our life anyway. You do not need the amount of clothing you have accumulated. "Do I love what I'm wearing?" is the best question to ask as you clean out your closet.

No stuffed drawers or closets

How many overflowing drawers do you have? What about your closet? If things are crammed into dressers and shelves, it becomes pointless to do laundry because the items cannot ever be put away. Make a rule that you will no longer live with full drawers. Space is good. Only keep what you love to wear.

Once you have cleaned out your drawers and closets, your new mode of operation is any new clothing item that

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comes in will require getting rid of an equivalent item. Buy a new shirt = get rid of an old shirt. Friend gives you a sweater she doesn't want = get rid of a sweater you don't like as much as the one you just received.

The subject of weight loss related to clothing is worth mentioning here. Many people save clothing as a type of motivation for when they lose weight. They have drawers of clothing in lower sizes. *Get rid of it all!* You cannot wear it now, and when you can, it will be more rewarding to purchase updated clothing as a reward for your weight loss.

Get a fresh start! Without a doubt, get rid of all clothing in higher sizes. Your health begs you not to leave the door open to weight gain. Keep only clothing that fits you right now.

Maternity and seasonal clothes are an exception. A great way to store these items if you lack space is to purchase a space bag. By vacuum sealing these bags, your clothes will take half the space, allowing you to store more in a smaller amount of space. You may even be able to hide it under your bed!

Words of Encouragement

If you have actually taken time to read this book through to the end, you have every piece of information you need to become very organized in your home and life. (Can you hear the angelic chorus singing?) The only thing I didn't cover in this book is how to organize your garage—that's a whole book in itself. So when I'm ready to have a heart attack, I'll start that one.

I'm sure you have taken golden nuggets away from this book to incorporate into your life. Whether one nugget or five, each tip I've made available will be a step to the next one. You can't quite say "organize shmorganize" with the same negative sarcasm as you did when you first started the book. Yes! There is hope!

Becoming organized is a process. Enjoy your journey, and as you learn, share the sanity with your friends!



What's My Deal?

I have been teased for years about how organized I am in my home and personal life. Not only do I enjoy living this way, I seek to improve and make everything more efficient. This way of thinking comes quite naturally to me, although I still have my areas of disorganization and clutter.

Take, for an example, my shoes. I am still on the hunt for an organized, space-efficient way to keep shoes. Warning: I will refuse any offer involving any obnoxious apparatus hanging from a door. Quite honestly, I am on the verge of thinking I may never find a way to organize my shoes.

Then there is my coat closet! Does there always have to be an arm of a coat hanging out, even when the door is closed?

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Let it be known, even an “organized person” can have weaknesses! So there I was (and am), organized and *still* struggling with my shoes and coat closet. Then I took a look at the homes of friends and family and realized they are getting completely buried in their belongings! (I think I may have just succeeded in never getting an invitation to dinner from anyone I currently know.)

What all the teasing came down to was really a cover-up for frustration. Friends and family were living in unorganized messes and could not find their way out of the clutter. Many would ask for advice, and I found myself repeating the same ideas over and over again. I decided it would be wise to compile the best organization tips and tools in a short book for everyone to get their hands on. So this was it!

And maybe I'll still get an invite to dinner.

Shmorganize Checklist

- Move dishes near dishwasher
- Make a meal plan
- Make a running grocery list
- Use pantry stock
- Create in/out bin
- Create a family calendar; Google or magnetic white board
- Designate a “remember me” location
- Create a designated toy area
- Create a designated technology area
- Create a designated book area
- Put a clothes hamper in the bathroom
- Replace towels rods with hooks
- Eliminate flat surfaces in your bedroom
- Create a permanent gym bag
- Eliminate clothes that you don't feel great in
- Be excited about any changes you make!
- Have fun!

