



50 Simple
Organizing Ideas

helping busy
people get more
done in less time
with less stress

smartworks!
organizing & productivity services 

Here are just a few, simple ideas that can help you get better organized. These handy organizing tips will get you back on track in no time at all. Don't overdo it though, just pick a few to start with and watch the results! Being organized leaves your mind free for other things and allows plenty of time for all you want to do, so give these a try. By implementing just a few, I guarantee you will soon feel in control.

General organizing tips

1 Create a 'home' for everything

If you don't know where something belongs, how do you know where to put it? Then if you need something, how do you know where to find it? Make a home for everything. If you don't have enough room for homes for all your stuff ... you have too much stuff.

2 Store similar items together

Categorization is important when you are getting organized. Keep all bill paying supplies in one place. Gather all of your craft supplies in one basket. Corral related things so that when you do something, everything will be easily accessible.

3 Use one calendar

The biggest mistake people make when using calendars is keeping more than one. Keeping business, personal and family activities on one calendar will eliminate missed appointments and scheduling conflicts.

4 Determine your goals

Before you start anything, determine its goal. If you don't know where you are going, how will you ever get there?

5 Plan your meals

Plan your meals before you write out your shopping list. It will save time and money because you'll know exactly what you need, and will eliminate those unplanned purchases.

6 Put things away each day

It really only takes a few seconds to put things back where they belong. If you can't put items back immediately, make a pile of stuff to put away at the end of the day before you sit down to relax for the evening.

7 Decide now

Most clutter is simply deferred decisions. 'I don't have time to decide where this belongs, so I'll just put this here ... for now.' Trouble is 'for now' can become 'forever. Decide where it belongs and put it there. I guarantee it will only take you a few seconds longer, and will eliminate large piles of deferred decisions to deal with down the road.

- 8 Toss out old reading material**
Go through your reading stack. Get rid of outdated newspapers. Ditch magazines older than 6 months. Yes I know there's probably a lot of valuable information in those magazines, but how will you ever find what you need when you need it?
- 9 Buy low maintenance stuff**
Are you making a lot of work for yourself by keeping items around that are high maintenance? Before you bring a new item into your home, ask yourself how much time, expense, care and maintenance will be dragged out of you.
- 10 Dump junk mail immediately**
You know what it looks like so don't even open it. Junk belongs in the trash.
- 11 Enlist your friends and family**
Does your house need to be painted? A great way to get the job done quickly is to throw a painting party – or whatever-big-job-you-need-done party. They supply the help ... you supply the pizza, sandwiches, beverages and dessert.
- 12 Have the proper tools on hand**
It's too difficult to do a job right when the tools are not on hand, or if you're improperly equipped. Purchase several pairs of scissors (one pair per room), pens that work, etc. Keep a pad of paper and a good supply of pens by every phone base in your home.
- 13 Create an effective work area**
Create a pleasant, well-equipped work area. Whether it's a nook, cranny or a large office, your work area should be conducive to performing the job at hand. It should contain all necessary supplies and equipment within arms reach or in easily accessible areas.
- 14 Use containers to corral stuff**
Inexpensive baskets and bins purchased at your local Dollar store can provide you with some of the best organizing tools. Put like items together into one. How about your most-used spices in a basket that you can easily slide out of the cupboard to access. Containers make it easy to keep your stuff organized.
- 15 Be ruthless**
If you haven't used an item in the last year you are not likely to need it again. Do you really want a clutter free, streamlined home or not?

16 **Quit buying stuff**

Stop and think. Ask yourself: *Do I really need this and have I got somewhere to keep this? Will I really use this? Do I want to be responsible for storing, cleaning and maintaining yet another item?* Don't shop unconsciously anymore. Some people work on a one in, one out system.

17 **Put away 50 percent of your ornaments**

Not only will this give your home a more modern minimalist look, you will get your dusting done in half the time. What about the ornaments you put away? Change them around from time to time, so that you can re-enjoy your precious mementos.

Handy tips for the bed and bath

18 **Clean out your closet**

Dressing each morning from a closet that is chaotic affirms that your life is chaotic. Organizers for shoes, hats, sweaters, gloves, belts, scarves, pants, handbags and ties can generate an incredible return on investment by blessing you with more time and less stress in the "search and hunt" process.

19 **Be realistic**

Don't keep clothes with the hope that you'll lose weight. If you do, chances are they will either be out of style, or you'll want to reward yourself with new items. Get rid of them, and take better care of the clothes you do have.

20 **Throw out all your wire hangers**

Use only plastic, wooden or padded hangers. Wire hangers do not properly support clothes and often bend or sag, resulting in a messy-looking closet, not to mention creases.

21 **Create a sense of serenity**

Your bedroom is where you retreat at the end your day. Shouldn't this space be clutter free? If your intimate space is visually disorganized, you have a constant reminder to "do something." It requires a lot of energy to suppress the nagging reminders to "do something." Clean out under your bed, behind the dressers and even in the drawers. Are there items in your bedroom that needn't be there? Assign them new 'homes' in other areas of your home. Any amount of disorganization detracts from your room's serenity. You'll awaken refreshed from a good nights' sleep when you're not surrounded by clutter.

22 Streamline your morning

Your morning routine should energize you for the day, not wear you out before you've even begun. Toss those old tubes of lipstick you no longer use. Experts tell us our make up needs to be replaced about every six months because of bacteria that grows on it – how long have some of those compacts been around for? Clear out your drawers and only put in what is essential to your daily routine. Half-used shampoo that you no longer use – donate it to a homeless shelter, and while you're at it, the shelter could also use all those sample packs of cleansers and shampoos you've been hoarding all these years. You don't need them.

23 Clean as you go

Wipe down the tile after you shower, or better yet, there are excellent products on the market that allow you to spray the tile after showering and voila! You've just cut down your bathroom cleaning in half. Keep a container of disinfectant wipes under the sink for quick sparkle and shine. Use old dryer sheets to wipe up the hair off of the floor. This takes about a minute, and your bathroom will look like it's just been fresh cleaned every day!

Tips for handling paper and files

24 Centralize your notes

Keep all of your notes to yourself in a single place, whether in a notebook, a paper organizer, or on your computer. My favorite tool is a spiral notebook that I keep by my phone. It's handy for all my notes, messages and miscellaneous phone numbers that I don't necessarily want to store in my phone directory.

25 Set up an action file for sorting mail

Use a table top file box and make a file for each of the following: **TO PAY**, **TO DO**, **TO READ**, **TO FILE**. Use whatever titles make most sense to you. Here are a few other categories you can use as well: **TO PAY**, **TO ANSWER**, **TO ATTEND** (as in go to i.e. tickets you want to purchase for an upcoming event, or also to look into an event or course). These are active files, so paper should always be attended to then moved out of these file folders into their permanent home.

26 Don't overstuff filing cabinets

There's nothing worse than having to file papers in a file cabinet that is overloaded. Leave enough room in the drawers so that you're not using all your energy to get a piece of paper in or out. Leave at least three inches of space in the file drawer. Remember 80% of what we file is never even looked at again! Maybe it's time to purge the old files.

27 **Categorize your files**

First, decide on broad categories according to the particular work materials in your office. Then, file alphabetically or chronologically within these categories.

Time management tips

28 **Leave some breathing room**

When organizing your schedule, don't jam-pack it full of tasks, activities and appointments. If you do, you will constantly be running around like a chicken without a head and you're bound to fall way behind every single day. Allow some time for things that may take longer than expected to complete, unexpected tasks, traffic delays, telephone hold, thinking moments, or simply a few minutes to relax and re-energize.

29 **Determine your best time for tackling tough tasks**

Use your most productive time to do your most productive work. Tackle your most difficult or important work during the time of day when you are at your best and you're more likely to complete it.

30 **Make the most of idle time**

Catch up on your reading while you wait for appointments. Keep a folder of articles you'd like to read but just don't seem to have enough time to. Been itching to read some educational books? Get them on audio – turn your car stereo into a university.

31 **Use master lists and to do lists**

Take control of your tasks. Here's how: A **master list** consists of all the tasks that you need to do, want to do, would like to do, etc. This list should be easily accessible as you are always adding to it. A **daily 'to do'** list is made up of those items that must be done **TODAY**. Some of the tasks on your daily 'to do' list will come from the master list. When used properly, these two lists will help manage those to out-of-control do's.

32 **Prioritize**

Prioritize tasks for each day. Then make sure you get the most important things done. If necessary, set aside time for priority tasks only. Learn to say "no" to unimportant tasks.

33 **Divide and conquer**

If you're feeling overwhelmed, divide complex tasks into manageable sub-tasks. Planning a dinner party may feel like a tremendous amount of work, but if the steps are broken down into smaller segments like ...

1. Make a list of people to invite;
2. Select invitations;
3. Mail invitations;
4. Plan party menu;
5. Shop for ingredients, etc.

Just start with one segment. Get it done. Then go to the next when you can. This is project management. Have a look at some of those big tasks on your to do list. Could they be broken down into small and manageable pieces?

Time management quick tips

34 Schedule "appointments with yourself" to complete priority work.

35 Schedule more time for tasks than you think it will take.

36 Develop the "do it now" habit. Don't procrastinate.

37 Delegate whenever possible.

38 Be time-conscious rather than a perfectionist.

39 Keep telephone conversations brief; discuss the business up front.

40 Say "no" more often. Have as much respect for your time as you do for others.

41 Don't keep shuffling papers; handle only once whenever possible.

42 Be in control of your own life; don't let others' lack of planning become your crisis.

- 43 When leaving a message for someone to call you back, indicate a convenient time to call.
- 44 Record the time you must leave when traveling to a distant appointment.
- 45 If you are distracted by items being dropped in your in-basket, move it from your desk.
- 46 Schedule specific amounts of time to review and dispense with your email.
- 47 Recognize you can't do everything. Work on the 20% that produces 80% of your results.
- 48 Manage stress by putting life into perspective, and not taking yourself too seriously.

Some good old advice

- 49 **End each day on a good note**
Save your easier tasks for the end of each day. You'll be able to complete them, and end each day on a positive and rewarding note.
- 50 **Continuously assess and improve**
Get organized and stay organized with the many available products on the market today.

Being organized leaves your mind free for other things and allows plenty of time for all you want to do, so give these a try.

What have you got to lose?



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About the Author

Georgina is Your Organizing Expert!

She is a fun, friendly and creative Productivity Consultant and Professional Organizer who shows busy people how to get more done in less time with less stress.

Her background includes over 25 years in various administrative and office management functions, which was a great training ground for becoming better organized. But that is not her 'claim to fame' ...

... it is the fact that she struggles with organizing and time management herself.

Why is this important to know?

She gets how difficult it can seem, however, has learned some simple ways to help her clients get back on track and in control of their day.

She believes that if a former 'messy' and recovering perfectionist – such as herself - can learn how to get organized (and even teach others how to do it) then anyone can do it.

Disorganization is just a dilemma that needs to be solved – it is not a character flaw!

With a little bit of help you can easily become an 'expert' at being organized.



Services

Smartworks! is a Calgary-based organizing and productivity consulting company that provides effective organizing solutions for busy people to manage their time, increase productivity and gain control of their workspace.

Smartworks starts your project with a Personal Productivity Assessment Questionnaire. This assessment targets the 4 main areas that are critical to increasing your personal productivity.

Ask me how you can get your Personal Productivity Assessment today.

Smartworks! provides the following services:

- Productivity Consulting
- Office Organizing
- Electronic Organizing
- Email Management
- Virtual Organizing
- Process Development
- Lunch & Learn Presentations
- Workshops & Training
- Speaking