

Scared of Your Clutter?



**53 Organizing Tips for
Today's Family**



Putting the FUN in FUNctional

www.TheProfessionalOrganizer.com

Tip #1

Make it fun for your family. If it's not fun and there is no reward, you'll be fighting every step of the way.

Tip #2

Think small. Establish mini-goals. Children and adults alike can easily get overwhelmed. Start with small spaces and little projects, just one shelf or one drawer. Then move on.

Tip #3

Make time. There's no such thing as free time for the modern family. You have to make time to get organized. Put it on the calendar.

Tip #4

Don't save every thing-a-ma-jig. If you don't know what it is or who it belongs to, it can probably be tossed. Don't save it "just in case."

Tip #5

Don't spend your time reminiscing. When you come across sentimental items, put them to the side to "ooh" and "aah" over later. Stay focused on the task.

Tip #6

Organizer's secret: The "Put Away Elsewhere" box. Don't stop organizing to put things away in another room. You may never come back. Put them in the box and put them away later.

Tip #7

Don't Floorganize! Get stuff off the floor by using shelves and other storage.

Tip #8

Supplies to have on hand as you are organizing: markers, tape, label-maker, post-it notes, scissors, zip-lock bags, black garbage bags for garbage, white garbage bags for give-aways, and boxes for sorting into.

Tip #9

How to get your family to part with their stuff? Ask each other these questions (in a gentle, non-judgmental tone):

- Why have you been keeping this?
- Does it enhance your life?
- Does it make you happy?
- Do you like it? Did you ever like it?
- Are you keeping it because you would feel guilty if you got rid of it?
- Do you have more of these than you need?
- Are you tired of it?
- If you get rid of this and need it again, can you get another one?
- Is it obsolete? Will it be obsolete by the time you need it?
- What's the worst thing that would happen if you didn't have it?

Tip #10

Time management begins by knowing what you want and need. The rest will fall into place.

Tip #11

Prioritize your activities based on what you want and need. Do not spend time doing things that aren't important to you and your family.

Tip #12

Use a family calendar for everyone's appointments. It helps to see them all in one place when coordinating driving, dinner, vacations, etc.

Tip #13

If you use a smaller mobile calendar, sync up with the family calendar at least once a week to avoid double booking appointments.

Tip #14

Work on overcoming over-commitment. Learn to say "no." Be selfish sometimes or you'll have nothing left for your family.

Tip #15

Use a timer. A regular kitchen timer makes a game out of putting things away. See how much your kids can do in one minute.

Tip #16

Use a timer to stay on task. You can do anything for just five minutes, right? Set a timer and do your organizing for just a few minutes at a time. Or better yet, put on an energizing song and organize a drawer or do your filing until the song ends.

Tip #17

Create routines. Children crave them as much as they rebel against them. Start with a morning routine. Then add bedtime, dinner hour, homework, and any others that you need.

Tip #18

Use a computer to save information you are constantly updating like an address list. Reprint it when you have changed several items.

Tip #19

Use a computer to store information that doesn't change and repeating lists such as a grocery list, holiday gift list, babysitter information, and directions.

Tip #20

Keep the pantry stocked and organized in categories like your favorite grocery store. You'll know when you are out of something just by looking.

Tip #21

Attack your "clutter magnets" daily. These areas seem to grow clutter all by themselves. Spend 5 minutes a day putting away as much as possible, and the pile will shrink. This method keeps clutter areas from turning into mount trashmore.

Tip #22

Delegate easy family organizing tasks such as planning one meal a week, cutting/sorting coupons, and adding to the grocery list.

Tip #23

In 5 minutes you can:

- Remove expired medicine from a cabinet.
- Toss out broken and dried pens and pencils.
- Declutter a shelf or drawer.
- Discard canned food not used in a year.
- File 10 papers.
- Sort coupons.
- Clean papers out of a book bag or briefcase.
- File 10 business cards.
- Put one roll of photos into an album.
- Do the dishes.
- Pick 10 things to throw away.
- Clean out your purse.
- Toss out old make-up.
- Read and sort the mail.
- Clear off a counter or tabletop.
- Set out clothes for the next day.

Tip #24

In 15 minutes or less you can:

- Weed out papers in 3 files.
- Plan meals for 3 days.
- Make lunches for the next day.
- Weed out children's art.
- Make a list of movies to rent.
- Make a babysitter information sheet.
- Xerox everything in your wallet and store it for emergency purposes.
- Make a list of bank and credit card accounts.
- Organize a junk drawer.
- Clean out the car.

Tip #25

Keep a bin of gifts in the closet for birthdays so you don't have to go to the store as often.

Gift ideas for all ages:

- Electric toothbrush and toothpaste
- Books
- Movies on DVD
- Art supplies

Tip #26

Clutter-free children's gifts:

- Movie rental passes
- McDonald's gift certificates
- iTunes gift cards
- Movie passes
- Coupon for special lunch date
- Tickets to water park
- Tickets to theme park
- Tickets to the zoo
- Magazine subscription
- Tickets to a museum

Tip #27

Create a "list notebook" to organize your brain. You can use blank pages, lined paper, or print list templates off the Internet:

<http://www.theprofessionalorganizer.com/DIY.htm>.

Keep lists of:

- Books to read and movies to see
- Gifts to give/purchase/sizes
- Home maintenance schedule
- Babysitters
- Wish list (stuff you want)
- Phone numbers and addresses

Tip #28

Use a binder to keep track of recipes you print off the Internet, clip from magazines, or write down.

1. Fill a binder with 100 page protector sheets and extra wide dividers (available at office supply stores).
2. Decide on your categories (soup, salad, main dish, side dish, dessert) and label the dividers.
3. Slip each recipe into a sheet protector. You now have a new cookbook protected from spills.

Tip #29

Keep track of your favorite recipes in your cookbooks with a recipe organizer list.

Write down your favorite recipe, which cookbook it is in and on what page. You'll never lose a recipe again. Create the list yourself or print a free one at:

<http://www.theprofessionalorganizer.com/DIY.htm>.

Tip #30

Organize your greeting cards with a 3-ring binder and 6 pocket dividers.

Label each divider with the 12 months if you shop for cards for each person. Label each pocket by the type of card if you buy generic (thank you, birthday, baby, get well). Now put your cards in the pockets, and you're organized.

Tip #31

Meal planning made simple:

1. Quick – think of 5 main dishes your family will eat. Write each on an index card.
2. Think of 5 side dishes they will eat. Great! Write each on an index card.
3. Now make a list of the ingredients needed on each index card.

You now have a meal plan for the week. Leave one night open for leftover night and another night to eat out or take in. Re-use the cards for weeks to come. As you think of more dishes, add them to the rotation.

Tip #32

Set up play areas similar to kindergarten. Create stations for reading, pretend play, building, arts & crafts, games, etc.

Tip #33

Use a double hanging system in children's closets. Install a low rod so that small children can reach their own clothing. Use upper closet space for off-season clothes, shelving or long hanging items.

Tip #34

Use drawers for clothing instead of shelves. Shelves are great for people who are naturally tidy, but drawers are better for those who are not. Drawers can hide things that are not in perfect order. It is easier for children to put things away if they don't have to be folded perfectly.

Tip #35

If you like your child to dress in outfits, hang or fold sets of clothing together. When traveling, try packing each outfit for small children in individual baggies.

Tip #36

Give your child permission to be independent. Let your child care for his or her things, put things away, get dressed, and take dirty clothing to the laundry room. You will both reap the benefits later.

Tip #37

Weed out religiously! It is what separates the organized from the cluttered. Notice what is trash. Notice what doesn't fit. Notice what you don't use or love any longer and move it out of the house.

Tip #38

Every child needs a treasure box and shelves to display special things.

Tip #39

Provide plenty of shelving for books. Sort books by reading level so it is easy to recognize which to weed out. For preschoolers, place a dozen books in a basket on the floor so they can "read" as well.

Tip #40

Label drawers and toy bins for pre-readers with words and pictures. This teaches them to sort by type and works as a little reading lesson.

Tip #41

Things every child needs:

- A bed that is easy to make
- A place to keep clean clothes and shoes
- A place for off-season clothing
- A place for clothing to grow into
- A hamper for dirty clothes
- A garbage can
- Shelves for books
- A spot for doing homework
- A place to store schoolwork
- A place to store finished papers and reports
- A place to keep toys
- A treasure box and/or display shelves
- A keepsake box for special items

Tip #42

When organizing schoolwork, create a binder for daily organization. Use a 3-ring binder and 3-4 pocket dividers. Label the sections:

- Information for parents/to be signed
- Return to school
- Homework assignments
- Homework in progress
- Graded papers
- Blank paper
- Other subjects they need

Create a file box at home where the child can keep papers that don't need to go back to school. Label the files by class subject. Toss most papers after the grading period is over.

Tip #43

Teach your teenager to plan by letting him help plan your travel itinerary, budget, and route to take.

Tip #44

Create 2 keepsake boxes for every child. The first is for 3-dimensional objects such as a baby blanket, stuffed animals, trophies, etc. The second is for papers and flat projects.

Tip #45

Create a keepsake filing system for each child if you want to be more organized (great for scrapbooking). Use a mobile file box or drawer and hanging files to save these papers.

- Schoolwork
- Artwork
- Awards/Certificates
- Medical/Health
- Photos
- Friends & Family
- Keepsakes
- Hobbies/Sports
- Vital Records (copies of birth certificate, social security card, passport, etc.)

Tip #46

Print your photos regularly. Put them into albums so you and your family can enjoy them. If you're backed up, start an album that begins today. Let your children help sort the pictures and put them into albums. This is a great family activity as it opens the door to family storytelling!

Tip #47

Use services like snapfish.com and kodakgallery.com to upload your digital photos and print them. It saves a trip to the store.

Tip #48

Buy photo albums that give you space to write information next to your pictures.

Tip #49

Use over-the-door shoe bags with 12 or more pockets to organize all around the house, not just shoes:

- Hats, gloves, & scarves in hall closet
- Bathroom toiletries
- Cords & chargers
- Craft items
- Barbies
- Changing table items
- Small office supplies instead of a junk drawer

Tip #50

Set up a launch pad to rocket you out the door in the morning:

- Designate this area to keep book bags, diaper bags, lunch boxes, shoes, jackets, keys and wallet, purse and umbrella, cell phone, briefcase and PDA. Add an outlet for charging if needed.
- This area works best if it is near the door that you use to enter and exit the house.
- Use a tote bag or box to stash returns, things to do, and other errand items.
- Install hooks for coats.

Tip #51

Organizing Do's with children:

- Delegate responsibility when possible.
- Let a young child help when he/she is willing or interested.
- Make it fun! Turn it into a game.
- Offer incentives and rewards.
- Write down the chore assignment.
- Explain clearly what you expect.
- Demonstrate how to do a job.
- Do it together, then let them do it alone.
- Keep it fair and share the work.
- Set a regular time of day for work.
- Be consistent and flexible at the same time.
- Be consistent with what you say and always follow through.
- Make agreements and write contracts.
- Make consequences worse than doing the work itself.

Tip #52

Organizing Don'ts with children

- Don't expect young children to do things by themselves. Give them proper training.
- Don't expect a child to manage too many things or tasks.
- Don't give one child authority over another child.
- Don't make the work sessions too long.
- NEVER redo a child's work if you have already approved it.
- Don't expect perfection. They will learn to do things better with practice.

Tip #53

Create a household command center to clear the paper clutter on counters, tables, and

other areas around the house. Start with 10 hanging files and a desktop file holder. Label the folders according to the action you need to take before you can get rid of the paper. Spend 5 minutes a day sorting mail into it. And spend 5 minutes a day DOing some of the action items.

The most commonly used file names are:

- To Pay - for bills and other payments.
- To Do - for calls, correspondence, errands.
- Waiting For - holds claims, rebates, order confirmations and other pending items.
- Events to Attend - for invitations, classes, tickets and anything with a date.
- To File - because it is more efficient to file several papers at the same time.
- Coupons to use – for coupons, gift cards, gift certificates and anything that equals money. Take coupons to the car weekly.
- To Enter – for items that need to go into the computer or PDA.
- Receipts to process
- Fingertip File - for phone lists, schedules at a glance, class list.

Other useful files:

- School
- Photos
- Projects
- To Work



Notes:



The Professional Organizer is an organizing service with affiliates located throughout the United States. Our organizers are committed to improving clients' lives through simple systems that are easy to maintain. Call The Professional Organizer

near you to jumpstart your next organizing project.

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Contact Allison for information on programs and keynotes on organizing and the organizing industry. Allison trains and mentors new organizers as they enter the field.

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