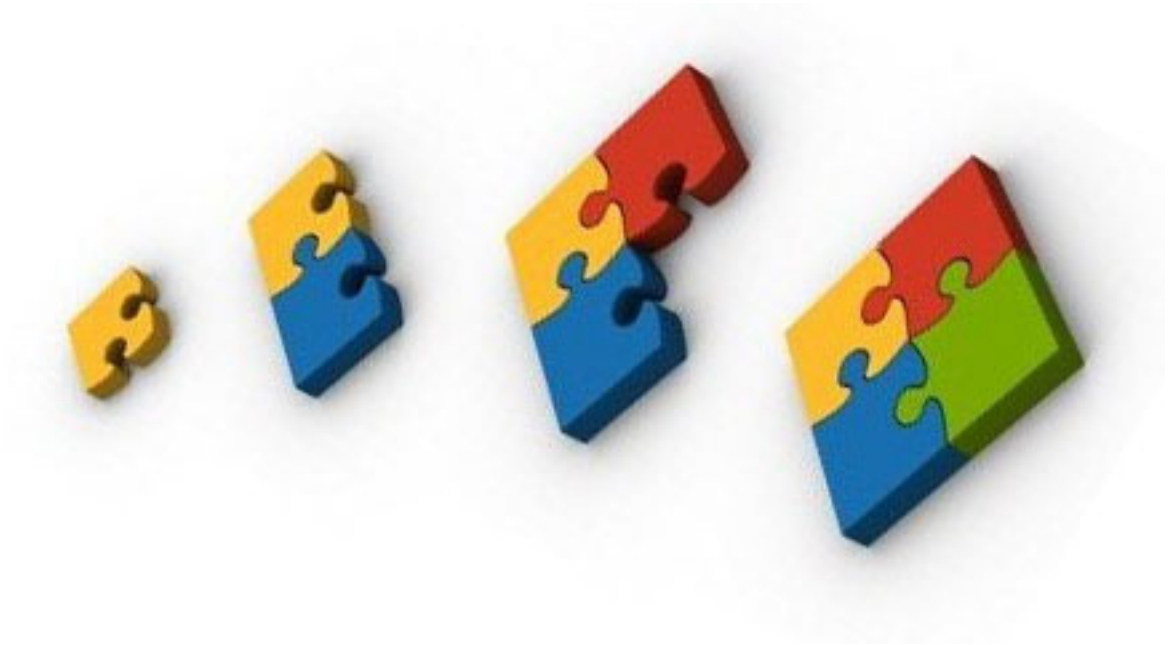
4 Fundamental Organizing Skills Everyone Should Know



Organizing skills can prove to be incredibly effective in maintaining a stress-free and productive life. Why is it that so many of us have organizing skills that are rusty and unused? Let's take a step back to your childhood and think about organizing skills on that level. Childhood is a time of learning new skills – you don't know how to do it until someone shows you. Organizing skills are very much the same. If you were never taught organizing skills how can you use them? No one teaches "Organizing 101"at school! So let's pretend that class is in session and look at some basic organizing skills through the eyes of a child…

Group Like With Like

This is one of the most fundamental organizing skills we must obtain. Try singing the Sesame Street song "which of these things is not like the other?" as you organize your storage spaces. When you look around, do you see anything that is clearly out of place? Is there a drill in your pantry or shoes in your file drawer? Sort your belongings into piles according to their purpose: grooming, sports, office supplies, etc. As you store each category, keep similar items together. The travel alarm goes with your luggage, pots and pans go in the same cabinet, and ink cartridges should be near the printer. This organizing skill will set you up for the others.

Give Everything A Home

Organizing skills can easily be demonstrated by a Montessori preschool. Think about how every crayon and building block has a set home, containers are labeled and color coded, and kids know exactly where to go to find the toy they want. As we become adults, we forget our organizing skills and randomly stick things in the first available cabinet, and then complain later when we can't find them. Each time you assign an item to a storage space, ask yourselfwhy you are stashing it there. Because it's close to where you will use it? It will be easy to see or reach? That's the first place you would think to look for it? Make sure you always have a good reason for storing an item in a certain spot.

Pick Your Favorites

This is a secret organizing skill that is quite important! If you put a child in a room full of toys, they will eventually choose just a few favorites to focus on and ignore the rest. Grownups are the same way – we use 20% of our belongings 80% of the time, and vice versa. You have that one outfit that you wear to death, the same dishes you pull out for every meal, and a few books that you read again and again – the rest go untouched. Put your organizing skills to work by giving preference to these “favorites” and see if you can’t weed out some of the other 80% that is just taking up space.

Allow Room To Grow

Do you know why children’s furniture is modular? Because a 10 year-old doesn’t have the same “stuff” as he did when he was 5! But adults often set up a storage system once and think that it is “finished.” As your lifestyle and interests change, your storage must evolve to match. Always leave approximately 15% of your space free for expansion. And each year, take a minute to re-evaluate your storage and make sure it still meets your needs. If not, it may be time to tweak your system.

You can apply these organizing skills to any project – at home or at work. And once you do, you’ll find yourself at the top of a very organized graduating class!

by Ramona Creel