

## Conquer Clutter and Get Organized for the New Year!



If you feel like the "organizing" bug has bitten you, you're not alone. At this time of year, you're likely to have a strong desire to get organized and regain control of your house.

To keep your house organized year after year, be smart and savvy. Follow clutter busters that everyone in your household can easily follow and maintain. To determine which organizational systems are the best, follow this simple test: Ask yourself, "Can my family members follow this system with little or no instructions from me?" If the answer to that question is "YES", it's a good system and should reduce the calls of family members asking, "Where is...?"

First and foremost, the key to being organized is having a designated place for everything. If you don't have designated places, the end result is clutter. The quick and simple tricks below will conquer the common, hard to tame clutter that piles up in your home. Best of all, these 6 clutter busters take just 10 minutes or less to put into place!

**Take Control of Sales Receipts:** Do you have numerous sales receipts lying around, but you can never find the one you need? Save time and stress by creating a simple sales receipt box. Find an attractive box, approximately 4 x6 in size, with a lid. If you can't find a nice looking box, cover a box with fabric or paper to match your decor. You'll want to create one that's nice enough to leave out in an easily-accessible location like a shelf or accent table - otherwise you won't use it.

Add to the box a set of alphabetical index tabs from A to Z. When you bring home a receipt from a store, put it behind the corresponding letter the name of the store begins with. For example a Target receipt would be placed behind the letter "T." Once or twice a year while watching TV, go through and purge the old receipts.

**Find a Temporary Home for Spare Parts and Unknown Pieces:** One day or another we all find a part, screw, or who knows what that we're hesitant to throw out because we don't know what it belongs to. To create a home for this collection, label a box for the "Spare Parts & Unknown Pieces." Then toss an unknown piece into this box until you can determine whether you need it or not.

As you collect miscellaneous spare parts, toss them in this box as well. For example, a vacuum cleaner usually comes with a spare belt. Before tossing it in the box, label the belt indicating which vacuum cleaner it belongs to.



Additionally, we all have some of those yellow square vinyl patches that come with new inflatable items. But if you're like most people, you don't know what to do with them. The solution: simply toss the yellow patch into this box.

**Clean Up Unused Cords, Phones, and Chargers:** Every household seems to have plenty of cords, cables, cell phones and chargers that aren't in use, but are kept as spares. Label a box or bin "Electronics." Toss in every-day extension cords, but first coil the cord and place it in a zip top storage bag or place a rubber band around each cord individually.

Also, toss in cables to your devices that are not currently in use. Before tossing the cables, be sure to place a label on the cable indicating which device it belongs to (such as the brand name of the camera or phone). Otherwise you'll just have an organized heap of unknown cables.

For the ultimate in cable organization: When labeling a USB cable, place a small label (with the name of the device) on the USB end that plugs into the computer, making sure to place the label on the side of the cable that faces up (or out). This way, you'll know which way to plug it into the computer each time - no more turning the USB cable one way then the other to figure it out. To be more discrete when labeling cables, print the label on black tape with gold print. The black tape will blend in with the black cord.

**Organize Your Giveaway:** Every household needs a box or bag for items you wish to give away or donate. This will eliminate the need for a major de-cluttering process down the road. Each time you come across an item you don't need or want, toss it into the giveaway box. If you receive a gift that you know you'll never use, put it in this box. When you find yourself no longer wearing a particular style or size of clothing, add it in this box. Be sure to label the box or bag as "Giveaway" so all your family members can freely contribute items. When the box is full, donate it to friends, family, or a charity.

**Ready Your Returns:** Label a basket or bin for items you need to return. Keep this basket near the door you most often use. When you have an item to return, such as a store return, library book, or borrowed item from a family member or friend, toss it in the basket or bin. If an item is too large to fit in the box (like a crib), put a note about the item in the basket. Also, toss in the sales receipts you need for the store returns.

**Keep Manuals & Warranties Where You Can Find Them Later:** When the holidays are over you may find yourself buried in manuals and warranties from new items. Keeping these organized and easily accessible can save you a substantial amount of money if you can take advantage of the warranty in the future.

First, consider photocopying the receipt. Most receipts are on thermal paper which can easily fade. Then attach the original receipt and photocopied receipt to the manual and warranty.

Next, there are two different approaches to organize your manuals; select the one that best fits you.

For the person who is a tosser and more laid back, set aside 5 letter size boxes. Label each box with one of the categories: Appliances (small & large), Electronics, Furniture & Decor, Toys, and Miscellaneous. Then toss each manual and warranty into the appropriate box and store it on a shelf.

If you like to be a bit more organized than just "tossing," consider using 3-ring binders. You'll need about three 3" to 4" binders, "D" ring binders are preferred over "O" ring. Next, add a set of tabbed alphabetical indexes to the binders but be sure to divide just one set among all your binders.

Place the manual and warranty, along with the sales receipt, into a clear protector sheet. Then place the clear protector sheet into one of the three binders in alphabetical order by name of the item. For example, the manual for your television would go behind the letter "T" tabbed index. When you've completed putting your manuals in the binders, label the outside of each binder with the corresponding manuals that are inside, for example A-H, I -R and S-Z.

By following these simple tips, you can conquer the clutter that often accumulates over the holidays – and be well on your way to an organized, Happy New Year!





KEEPING YOU ORGANIZED



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Diane is a Certified Professional Organizer and nationally recognized expert in the field of organization and productivity. She is the creator of Ten Minutes a Day to Organizing Success® and Work Piles Made Easy®. Her website is [www.DianeAlbright.com](http://www.DianeAlbright.com)

