

## **Organizing your Office**

*Out of clutter, find simplicity. Albert Einstein*

Okay, quick: where is your spare printer-ink cartridge? Don't know? Well, that's not good, because your printer will probably go out just as you're printing out a contract for that client who's always in a big hurry.

Some people are blessed with a knack for organization. Their desks might be messy or neat, but they always know exactly where everything is, and they've got things set up to work efficiently. Others, though, are organizationally challenged. If you're among them, maybe you've got piles of stuff you've got to go through "someday," and you probably lose your car keys a lot.

In our eat-on-the-run always-in-a-hurry-society, staying organized is more important than ever. Disorganization creates additional work, making you feel even more rushed than you really are. You may find you're late for appointments. Or, if your problem is more serious, you may even forget to pay important bills.

It's harder than ever to stay organized, but it's not impossible. Here are some suggestions that might help you keep track of your life:

1. Remember that there's no right or wrong way to organize your office. There's only what works for *you*.
2. Accept yourself the way you are. The organization gurus may tell you to keep a file of reminders in your drawer, and that's a great idea – as long as you remember to check the file. But what if you're one of those people that won't remember anything unless it's "in your face"? Then don't put reminders in a file. Instead, put them on your car seat, or put a sticky note on your rear-view mirror. In short, do what you have to do to get the job done.
3. Try to set things up so you can do things just once. For example, when you go through mail, take care of things immediately that will just take a minute or two. Then file away the paperwork.
4. Speaking of paperwork, keep a back-up of your computer files. Remember, it's not a matter of *whether* your computer will crash, it's a matter of *when*. Keeping a backup will make you feel more secure, thereby reducing your psychological urge to keep paper copies of everything.
5. If your office is a mess, don't let yourself get overwhelmed by the prospect of cleaning. Start small. Tell yourself that today you will clean out just the front half of one drawer.

6. Once you've got your office clean, reserve a few minutes each day to re-clean, file, and do general upkeep.
7. Get help. Look on the Internet for tips on organizing an office. If you're really challenged, have yourself evaluated for adult attention deficit disorder. Hire an organizer or a life coach. Your increased productivity will more than pay for the cost.
8. Stay in reality. You have stamps, right, but where? Here's the bottom line: If you don't know where they are, then you don't have any. That means you'll have to budget in time to find them or buy replacements.
9. Invest in the proper equipment. Buy the equipment you need to keep it organized – dividers, files, more desk surface space, or whatever. Indulge yourself a little and make it fun.
10. Make it comfortable and pleasant. If you don't like entering your office, there's something wrong.

Of course, there are many, many more tips for organizing. But the most important thing to remember is this: Staying organized is not only necessary, it's *possible*. Think it through and get help if you need it. You'll find yourself with time you didn't know you had!

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**Summary:** Good organization is essential to good productivity. Learn to do things in an organized way. Accept your shortcomings and work within them while you try to improve them. Find a way to organize that works for you and makes your office a pleasant destination.