

The clutter

My Top 10 Cardinal Rules of Organizing.

BY HELLEN BUTTIGIEG

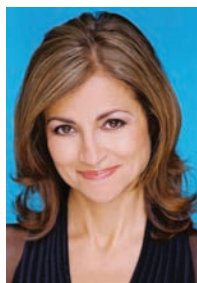
Getting organized is consistently in the top three resolutions people make. Bookstore shelves are lined with countless books on how to get organized. However, not having enough time is the number one reason people give when asked why they haven't organized their space.

With so much information on organizing, and so little time, how do we achieve our goal without feeling overwhelmed? Stick to the basics. Here are the 10 basic rules you need to know to keep your home organized and clutter-free.



1 Toss the 'no-brainers' first, because getting started is the toughest part.

This is the easy stuff like expired coupons, outdated warranties, excess plastic containers and glass jars, expired medicines, tattered towels, and stained or damaged clothing. Once you get started, it will be hard to stop. Your 'purge muscles' will get stronger and you'll soon be able to tackle the tough stuff.



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2 Limit memorabilia to favourites.

Create a pocket file system for your child's art and schoolwork; label each file by the school year. Help your child choose only their best pieces to save. Toss unflattering and duplicate photographs and store favourites in acid-free photo boxes. Keep only the greeting cards that contain special messages.

3 Think outside the storage box.

A fishing tackle box can be used to store Lego, Barbie accessories, make-up or sewing supplies. Recycle what you already have on hand before you purchase new containers. Use egg cartons to store small holiday ornaments or use ice-cube trays to hold earrings. Empty tissue boxes (with the tops cut off) can store packets of soups or powdered mixes upright. Use empty cereal boxes (cut off the top third diagonally) to store magazines or product manuals.

4 Use bins and baskets to hide a multitude of sins, but store like with like.

If the bins aren't clear, make sure you label them. Choose containers that stack. Square is better than round because they hold more yet use the same amount of space on a shelf. Purge your space and take stock of exactly

what you need to store before you shop for storage containers – otherwise the containers become part of the clutter. Always keep similar items together so you can easily find what you need.

5 Book an appointment.

Make a firm commitment to begin organizing by booking an appointment with yourself. Choose a date and time and mark it on your calendar, whether it's next week or next month. Blocking time to handle tasks prevents procrastination.

6 Assign a home.

Every item needs a home. Store items close to where you would normally use them to save steps and time. This increases the likelihood that they will be put back in that spot when not in use. Items used together should be stored together. Create kits for regular tasks like sewing, gardening or washing the car. When choosing a home for your items, ask: where am I most likely to look for this item? The first location that comes to mind is usually the best.



DID YOU HEAR...?

- Do you think you could clench your fist 100,000 times today? That's basically what your heart does, since it beats about 100,000 times a day.
- Men's khakis have military origins. A British officer, billeted in India during Queen Victoria's reign, had the stain-hiding idea of dyeing white uniforms with a mix of curry powder and coffee. Khaki is from the Hindi word for dusty.



7 Use the 'One-In/One-Out' rule.

When you purchase one item, it should replace another similar item. Resist buying extra hangers and additional shelving units after you've done your initial purge.

8 Maximize vertical space.

When there doesn't seem to be any storage space left, look up. Using vertical space frees up horizontal space, which is more limited. Add shelves above existing ones, over door frames and as a border just below the ceiling. Use tall bookcases and wardrobes and add bins or baskets on top for additional storage. Use over-the-door hangers, hooks and pegboards. Mount small appliances under cabinets.

9 Use it or lose it.

Pick your favourites and let go of the rest. If you haven't used it in a year, you probably never will. If you had to replace it in

a pinch, you probably could. On the other hand, if you keep everything 'just in case' you'll eventually have to buy a bigger house to store it all (and then you may not be able to find the item when you need it anyway).

10 Focus.

Avoid zigzag organizing or you may become distracted and overwhelmed. Begin in one corner and work your way around systematically. Resist going from room to room – have a 'move elsewhere' box for items that belong in another room and transport them at the end of the organizing session. 🌿

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