



# TIPS FOR DIY ORGANIZING SESSIONS

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## DON'T MAKE THESE 10 AMATEUR MISTAKES!

1. Start the project by buying organizing products.
2. Have no plan for which categories of items go in which rooms/spot.
3. Create piles that aren't labeled.
4. Leave the room you were working on to put something in the room it belongs in and get distracted.
5. Create overly complicated systems that you won't maintain or remember.
6. Use containers with lids for frequently used items.  
Bins with lids should only be used:
  - a. for containing odors (nail polish, certain cleaners, chemicals)
  - b. in garages, attics, basements, and other dusty/dirty environments
  - c. when you must stack bins to get everything in the space
  - d. when you will be transporting the items
  - e. as part of childproofing
  - f. for food that is not otherwise contained/sealed or needs to be protected from air
7. Use pantries on Pinterest as your inspiration and put all your pantry items in clear containers with lids when you aren't prepared for the extra time unloading groceries and the extras that don't fit in the container.
8. Organize items you don't want or need.
9. Think that the best home for items is the place they have always been. Just because the house builder or previous homeowner left all the manuals/warranties in the kitchen drawer doesn't mean they stay there. Be mindful that the items you use daily (or even weekly) need to be stored where you can most easily access them. Prime real estate is top drawers and cabinets and shelves at eye level.
10. Schedule an organizing session for time of day when you will be fatigued.



## 10 STEPS FOR DIY ORGANIZING

- 1. Gather “Tools for Organizing.”** Prepare properly for your DIY Organizing Session. See Page 3 for suggestions.
- 2. Label your piles and use containers you will remember.** Use an empty laundry basket for items that you will distribute to another room at the end of your session. Have an empty cardboard box (or plastic bag) for donations. If you plan to donate to multiple charities, label each one so you are only sorting once. Trash bags and recycling bins are essential. Some typical labels needed are: GIVE TO \_\_\_\_\_, MEMORABILIA, PHOTOS, REPAIR, ASK \_\_\_\_\_, SHRED, URGENT.
- 3. Set a timer to go off 15 minutes before you need to be finished.** The recommended time for DIY projects is 2.5 hours, so set timer for 2 hours and 15 minutes.
- 4. Remove what does not belong in the closet/room.** Put these items in the laundry basket. Do not leave the space until the timer goes off!! When timer goes off, use that remaining 15 minutes to relocate the items in the laundry basket. Take piles where they need to go. Ideally, place donations in your trunk and schedule a time to take them.
- 5. Purge.** “Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful.” – William Morris. See page 4 for a list of questions to ask yourself. For clothing, if it doesn’t fit, either put it in a consign or donate pile, or put in a bin labeled with the size. Do not mix clothing of different sizes in the same bin. For now, just create a pile and label the size that is in that pile.
- 6. Infrequently Used Items.** Identify items that are used infrequently (less than twice a year). Group them together by category. Put like items in a cardboard box (or a bin you already own) on a high shelf and label it.
- 7. Categorize.** Group items being kept by their category or how they are used such that like is with like.
- 8. Analyze.** Identify the best spot for each category. Items used on a daily or weekly basis need to be easy to access and near their point of use. Consider where you or family members will think to look for items, too. Bulky/large items should not be at eye level whereas smaller items should be at eye level. For example, paper towels can be low or high whereas canned food needs to be at eye level.
- 9. Organize.** Use containers to corral like items and use organizers as needed to maximize the use of the space. Identify the organizing supplies needed – measure, select, purchase. I resell popular supplies at cost when I find deals on them. Respect the boundaries of the space. Here are 3 options for the surplus that won’t fit in the container/drawer/shelf: Discard, donate, or relocate extras to a top shelf or other location. For example, keep a handful of pencils and pens where you use them and put the rest in a labeled bin on a top closet shelf. Label containers and shelves as needed.
- 10. Maintain.** Set up reminders for maintaining. For most people, they tidy up daily, weekly, before the house cleaner comes, as season changes, with the New Year.



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## 10 HELPFUL TOOLS

1. Trash bags
2. Recycling bin (or bag or box labeled Recycling)
3. Shredder (or box labeled To Shred)
4. Cardboard boxes or plastic bags for donations
5. Labeling supplies (label maker, tape, painter's tape, pen, index cards tented to label piles, post-it-notes)
6. Cutting tools: scissors, box cutter, envelope opener
7. Cleaning supplies (especially for dusting)
8. Tape measure, notebook, pen/pencil (to determine bins/product to purchase)
9. Water, Music, Timer (phone/watch)
10. Vision – Seriously! Getting organized is not the goal! Get clarity on how you want the space (when organized) to allow you to accomplish your work and enjoy your life. For some spaces you may want it Pinterest worthy so that you feel a certain “Ah”. For other spaces you just need it to be functional so that you can find items and access them with the least amount of effort. Don't underestimate a clear vision as a tool.



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## 10 DECLUTTERING QUESTIONS

1. Is this an item I need? Or do I consider this item beautiful and/or it adds value to my life?
2. When was the last time I used this item or wore it?
3. If I haven't used it in a year, can it be replaced for less than \$20 in less than 20 minutes (or borrowed from a friend or neighbor)?
4. Would I buy this item again? (helpful with clothing)
5. Do I have another item which will do the same job (helpful for kitchen tools)?
6. Do I have the space to store this item? If yes, will it crowd items that I use on a regular basis?
7. Do I have the time/energy/resources to maintain (or repair) this item?
8. Can I borrow it if I need it?
9. What is the worst thing that could happen if I let it go?
10. Is there someone else who would benefit from this item more than I do? For example, consider how a homeless person would be grateful for that extra blanket you never use.



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*"I'm going to be overwhelmed until  
Liz Fackelman with Davidson Organizing comes on  
Monday to set me up."*

**IF YOU CAN ANSWER YES TO ALL 4 QUESTIONS,  
THE SPACE IS ORGANIZED!**

1. Does it work?
2. Do you like it?
3. Does it work for the people you care for?
4. Can you recover quickly when things get messy?