

fix it fast!

Skip the complex techniques and expensive solutions. This SIMPLE clutter-busting strategy is the only organizing method you need to get a well-ordered home in just 15 minutes.

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before

get started

The first step is easy when you use premade sorting cards. Visit BHG.com/EasySorting to get sort cards for seven of the most popular room projects.

Little by little by little by lot. Your home can be organized on the tightest of schedules, but only if you break projects into small, doable chunks. You're unlikely to experience much success if you decide to overhaul your entire closet tomorrow afternoon. "But you can almost certainly address just one item of clothing—your shoes, pants, or T-shirts, for instance—and end up with a clutter-free shelf, dresser drawer, or shoe rack," says Kathy Jenkins, Certified Professional Organizer and founder of Come to Order. "And that little spot of organization feels great every time you use it" (See "15 Organizing Projects in 15 Minutes—or Less!" on page 23 for more ideas.)

After identifying appropriate-size projects, Jenkins applies the SIMPLE method, her acronym for the six essential steps to eliminate clutter:

- S:** Sort like with like.
- I:** Identify what to keep.
- M:** Make a home for it.
- P:** Put it in containers.
- L:** Label it.
- E:** Establish a routine.

"The SIMPLE method is all about acting rather than overthinking," Jenkins says. You begin by **sorting like with like**. To eliminate barriers, Jenkins often gives clients premade "sort categories" that identify common types of items they'll encounter when working in a pantry, closet, or bathroom, for example. While the categories might seem obvious, Jenkins points out that "sorting is the first step on the roller-coaster ride of getting organized. Beginning can be terrifying, slow, and jerky. Having a preestablished starting point minimizes anxiety."

TOP RIGHT: We applied the SIMPLE method to a junk drawer. After setting a timer, we created sort cards, writing one category of stuff on each index card. (Give yourself a jump start by visiting BHG.com/EasySorting for premade sort cards.) TOP, FAR RIGHT: We laid out the cards on a clear counter and placed similar items in their appropriate categories. ABOVE RIGHT: We evaluated each pile, eliminating duplicate, broken, and unused items. RIGHT: We decided which items truly needed to be stored in our newly lined junk drawer. Extraneous items were shifted to other rooms and storage spots. FAR RIGHT: We shifted a few frequently used things—such as dog-walking gear that gets used several times a day—from the drawer to new hooks on the cabinet's side where it was more accessible.

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STEP ONE: Sort like with like



STEP TWO: Identify what to keep



STEP THREE: Make a home for it



STEP FOUR: Put it in containers



STEP FIVE: Label it



STEP SIX:

Establish a routine



After sorting, you **identify what you want to keep**. “The trick here is to remain positive. Focus on deciding what’s important to you rather than what to purge.” Of course, not everything that’s a keeper belongs in the same storage spot: You need to move on to Step 3, **make a home for it**, in which you purposefully assign storage spots for items.

Putting stuff in containers is the fourth step in the SIMPLE method, contrary to many people's instincts. "You must go through the first three steps before you buy anything," Jenkins says. "Don't worry about not having the right container right now. Take measurements and do some research. You will find it"

Wrap up your project by **labeling** where everything belongs, which is especially helpful when sharing a space, and **establish a routine**—a note, a calendar reminder, or a checklist—to solidify your changes into habits.

With a little practice, you should be able to progress through all six SIMPLE steps in about 15 minutes on a bite-size project. If your timer rings before you finish, don't fret. The strength of the SIMPLE method is that it also allows you to start and stop at any point during a long project. "As long as you know which steps you've completed, you can always get back on the ride," Jenkins says.

RESOURCES BEGIN ON PAGE 114.

ABOVE: We selected the best container for our junk drawer. The bamboo utensil trays we used come in the right sizes for all our items and can stack. ABOVE RIGHT: We used an electronic label maker to print basic adhesive labels, which we affixed labels to the sides and the bottoms of our containers. ABOVE, FAR RIGHT: Leaving a note nearby reinforces our newly organized junk drawer and reminds us to check whether the new system is working on a regular basis. After it becomes habit, we can discard the note.



15 organizing projects **IN 15 MINUTES—OR LESS!**

The key to speedy success is defining the space you're working on. Try these 15 spots that each take about 15 minutes to organize when using the SIMPLE method. Don't miss our strategic tips and product recommendations.

| what to organize | SIMPLE strategy tip | helpful product |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1 junk drawer | Pay attention to purpose. Items stored here aren't junk; they're essentials people need irregularly. | Drawer organizers. Whatever material you choose, look for containers that come in a range of sizes and shapes. |
| 2 cooking or eating utensil drawer | Focus on frequency of use. Everyday tools need barrier-free access while the rest can be tucked away. | Adjustable trays or dividers. You want each compartment to hold only one type of tool, one layer deep. |
| 3 main desk drawer | Demand perfection. All items must work flawlessly. Fix or discard broken items immediately. | Acrylic containers. The obvious contents of clear trays and canisters eliminates the need for labels. |
| 4 pantry shelf | Put daily-use food at eye level. Breakfast foods, snacks, and favorite oils and spices deserve prominence. | Risers. Introducing levels on a shelf allows you to see every product. No more overshopping! |
| 5 refrigerator or freezer | Assign spots. Use your fridge's current contents to establish specific spots for foods you typically stock. | Moisture-resistant labels. Affix to shelves, racks, and trays—as well as containers. |
| 6 meal planning for one week | Keep it going. Work up four to six weeks of menus so you have a meal plan even when you don't feel creative. | Shopping checklists. Create a personalized list of items you regularly buy and tick off your current needs. |
| 7 car glove box and trunk | Streamline and steady. Pare down the glove box to essentials; group trunk gear in bins with no-slide bottoms. | Clear pouches. Group glove box documents in vinyl envelopes; affix a pocket to trunk interior for small stuff. |
| 8 jewelry | Accentuate ease. Accessories must be super simple to reach and try on. | Small open containers. Fill a drawer with shallow bowls and divided trays. |
| 9 catalog possessions for insurance | Make a movie. Stand in each room and shoot video. Open doors and turn over items to reveal important numbers. | Digital camera. Your current camera probably has adequate video capabilities that you can use. |
| 10 wallet and purse/personal bag | Streamline. Compile all shopping club info onto a piece of cardstock or use a phone app to store everything. | Zippered mesh bags. Fill with clusters of cosmetics, electronics accessories, or kid supplies. Switch from bag to bag. |
| 11 grooming supplies and cosmetics | Sequence supplies. Position toiletries in a drawer, bin, or cabinet based on the order you use them. | Matching containers. Fill with various toiletries, stock excess elsewhere, and add labels. Enjoy a less-cluttered look! |
| 12 linen closet | Think about yourself. Organize for you and your family. Store guest towels and sheets under a bed. | Shelf dividers. Keep towels and washcloths in neat, separate stacks. |
| 13 one type of clothing | Gather like items. Consolidate one garment type in a pile and evaluate. Store in one spot rather than many. | Shelves and cubbies. Look for ways to access stacks of clothing. Keep socks, underwear, and accessories in drawers. |
| 14 undersink area | Routinize cleanliness. Keep this area neat by storing only one paper towel roll. Tidy up each time you replace it. | CD storage box. Old media caddies are the perfect size for movable kits filled with cleaners or scrubbing tools. |
| 15 medicine cabinet | Enforce labels. Expired items must go. Check for special storage instructions and follow. | Mini shelf. Keep small supplies one item deep while maximizing every inch of a shallow cabinet. |