

# month-by-month storage plan

Get your home in order—once and for all—with easy projects to improve every room.

Maybe you've jumped into previous organizing projects with the best intentions but quickly gave up because you didn't know where to start or what you needed. Having a place for your things and being able to find them may sound like a fantasy, but it's possible—especially when you have a plan.

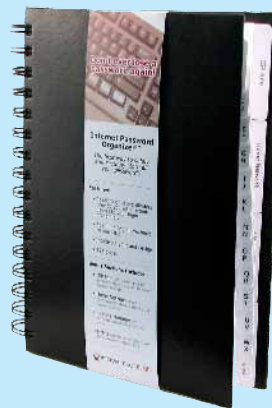
We joined forces with Organized A to Z.com and Kathy Jenkins, Certified Professional Organizer and president of Come to Order to develop a month-by-month guide that you can use to get your home clutter-free, one space at a time, in one year. (Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day, and you can't expect to totally reorganize your entire house in a weekend.)

Our exclusive 12-month storage and organization plan focuses on improving just one area in your home each month. Each of Jenkins' four monthly mini projects takes about an hour to complete—you truly can get something done in an afternoon. Do one project each week of the month or combine them during a weekend. The choice is yours.

So put on comfy clothes, turn on your favorite tunes, and start getting more organized today!

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**ALL PRODUCTS** through Organized A to Z.com; 888/989-2869; [organizedatoz.com](http://organizedatoz.com). Organizing services through Come to Order; 804/550-9428; [cometoorderva.com](http://cometoorderva.com).



## HOME OFFICE

- ❑ Keep all your passwords in a sturdy notebook (**Internet Password Organizer, \$20**) rather than on scraps of paper or buried deep inside your computer's hard drive. Store the book in a drawer or filing cabinet for security.
- ❑ Create a vertical paper-storage system using wall-mount file holders. Use labels to indicate specific drop spots for school assignments, bills, invitations, and events.
- ❑ Create a horizontal filing system for long-term paper storage. Use hanging folders and tabs to establish big categories such as Financial, Insurance, Personal, Household, Taxes, and Vehicle. Use subfolders to further organize specific papers.
- ❑ Keep only the current month of your favorite magazines. If old issues have important articles, clip them and store in a binder or file folder.

## KITCHEN

- ❑ Partition your kitchen drawers into sections with expandable dividers. Devote specific areas to flatware, serving utensils, tools, and other gadgets. Donate anything you haven't used in more than a year.
- ❑ Add risers (**bamboo expandable shelf, \$30**) to cabinets and shelves that contain small items such as spices, oils, canned goods, or drinkware.
- ❑ Put the front of your refrigerator to work. Fill a magnetic bin with masking tape and permanent markers. Use them to label the contents and date on containers before you put them in the fridge or freezer.
- ❑ Gather loose recipes and organize them by category in a photo album with slots for 4x6 pictures. Fold large pieces to fit the slots, allowing the recipe name and picture to show.



## LIVING ROOM

- ❑ Replace worn-out game boxes with sturdy containers (**Game Savers, \$11–\$13**). Label the outside of the boxes and stack on a low shelf or inside a cabinet or closet.
- ❑ Give each family member a portable bin to hold toys, reading material, or homework supplies. Use the bin to transport items from room to room. When you're done playing or working, put items in the bin and stow it in a cabinet or on a bookshelf.
- ❑ Corral TV, DVD, cable, and game remotes in a single storage bin. Label each remote for when guests or babysitters visit. Write any tips for using a remote on an adhesive mail label and stick to the back of the device.
- ❑ Designate a bin or basket as your family's "return basket." Drop in DVDs that need to be returned to the video store, books headed for the library, and anything else to be delivered somewhere. Place the bin near an entryway.



## LAUNDRY

- ❑ Label mesh laundry bags (**lingerie and sweater wash bag three-pack, \$6**) with names of family members. Hang bags near hampers. Drop in dirty socks and underwear, and then wash and dry the entire bag.
- ❑ Gather mending supplies (thread, needles, shears, pin cushions) and store in a small basket. Designate a centrally located bin as the holding spot for clothing to be repaired.
- ❑ Use a pair of hooks or a metal rack to hang your iron and ironing board from the wall or door of your closet or laundry room—wherever you prefer to press clothing.
- ❑ Install a wire shelf above your washer to hold detergent, fabric softener, pretreaters, and bleach. Do the same above the dryer and add low bins for dryer sheets, sewing supplies, and a small jar to hold pocket finds.



## ATTIC & GARAGE

- ❑ Use a rolling laundry sorter (**Triple compartment storage bin, \$80**) to store sporting gear. Cut a square of cardboard or thin plastic to stabilize the bottom of each section. Roll out the entire cart at playtime.
- ❑ Use stacking bins to sort small toys and sports items, such as tennis balls, baseballs, sidewalk chalk, and bubbles. Kids will have an easier time taking things out—and putting them away.
- ❑ Shake and open all paint cans to check whether the paint is usable. Note with a marker on the can's outside the room and date the paint was used. Turn over cans each year to keep them rust-free.
- ❑ Install a sheet of pegboard, add basic hooks, then hang tools and shelves to display smaller items. Label each hook so that items are more likely to return to their proper place.

## KIDS' ROOMS

- Divide clothes in closets using plastic tags (**five clothes closet dividers, \$12**). Sort clothes by size, type, or day of the week. Use labels included with dividers.
- Secure all furniture taller than 30 inches to the wall with appropriate anti-tip hardware. After you finish the kids' rooms, continue securing items in every room to prevent injury from tipping furniture.
- Store off-season clothes under the bed in natural fiber bags, which keep clothes clean and dust-free while allowing them to breathe. Label the bags, noting season and sizes.
- Use a portable file box to store school papers and artwork. Stash papers as they arrive. At the end of each school year, review the saved papers with your child to choose the keepers.



## AUTOMOBILE

- Gather all auto-related papers (registration, state inspections, owner's manual, and repair receipts) in one place and keep them in your car in a plastic or leather folder. Purchase or create a collision kit with a notepad and disposable camera.
- Corral trunk items in a single plastic or canvas bin. Choose a container with a zippered top and a hook-and-loop bottom that prevents tipping.
- Empty every compartment in your car. Toss trash, old maps, broken ice scrapers, and torn umbrellas. Use the glove compartment for papers, maps, and gloves; the door pockets for your umbrella and ice scraper; and the backseat pocket for kid stuff.
- Make your car kid-friendly by filling a container (**kid's car organizer, \$40**) with snacks, drinks, car games, books, and cleanup supplies. Choose one that fits in the middle of the back seat.



## BATHROOM

- Give each family member a water-resistant bin (**Orbz flex compartmented tote, \$10**) to hold bathing and cosmetic supplies. Encourage them to keep their bins under the sink, in a closet, or in their rooms.
- Write reminders for kids on the mirror with a dry-erase marker (black or blue ink works best). List things they must do every morning (brush teeth, comb hair, wash face, and make bed). This is also a great solution if you think of things to do while bathing and primping. Just make a note on the mirror and take care of the tasks after you finish getting ready for the day.
- Stash bathroom cleaning supplies (including cleaners, scrubbing tools, and a few rags) under the sink in a small basket. Keeping the bathroom clean is easier when you don't have to go to another room to get what you need.
- Install hooks for towels and washcloths if you have more bath linens than available towel bar space. Add screw-affixed or adhesive hooks to slivers of wall, cabinet sides, vanity exteriors, or the backs of doors.



## CRAFTS AREA

- Organize supplies on a metal memo board. Fill magnetic spice tins (**Endurance magnetic clear-top cans, set of four, \$18**) with small items. Dangle tools from magnetic hooks. Affix paper and fabric scraps with ceramic magnets.
- Convert a dresser into a vertical file for crafts materials. Use drawer dividers to organize supplies by project or type of craft. Fill shallow bins and boxes with all the gear you need for a specific activity; then just lift out and get to work!
- Turn a bookshelf into a crafts station. Store reference materials in magazine boxes and gather craft supplies in color-coordinated bins.
- Turn an entertainment armoire into a gift wrapping station. Use tension rods to store rolls of paper. Hang gift bags by their handles on small hooks mounted inside the cabinet. Hold wrapped presents in a low drawer until you're ready to give them.



## CLOSETS

- Hang purses, scarves, and belts from a strip of wall-mount hooks on a wall or the back of the closet door.
- Hang clothes by rainbow color with sleeveless and short-sleeve shirts coming after long-sleeve shirts on a horizontal bar. Group jackets, pants, and skirts following the same rainbow pattern.
- Organize folded shirts by sleeve length and color. Organize sweaters by season (lightweight for warm seasons; heavyweight for cold months) and then by color. Use plastic shelf dividers or a hanging shelf (**fabric sweater shelf, \$15**) to keep stacks from toppling.
- Try on all shoes and make sure they fit and are still in style. Donate any pairs that you can no longer wear but are still in good shape. Toss the rest. Use a vertical shoe tree to store shoes in small spaces. Store infrequently worn shoes in clear, stackable shoe boxes on a high shelf.



## ENTRY OR MUDROOM

- Mount a whiteboard (**Wallies Peel and Stick dry-erase panels, \$10 for two**) near the garage door for notes or reminders.
- Hang an over-the-door canvas shoe organizer on the back of an entry closet door. Use the bottom rows for shoes, and fill upper pockets with accessories such as gloves, hats, scarves, umbrellas, and pet-walking gear.

- Place a basket on your front steps to gather items that need to go back upstairs. Make a habit of taking the basket with you up and down the steps. (Think of it as an elevator for your things.) Don't forget to put items where they belong when you get upstairs!
- Install hooks about 3 feet up the wall for kids' coats, hats, and backpacks. Set out a metal or plastic tray for wet shoes or boots.



## DINING AREA

- Wash all vases with vinegar, water, and soap. (Add a handful of uncooked rice to clean difficult-to-reach interiors.) Organize vases by size and display on lazy Susans (**Linus Pulz two-tier turntable, \$16**).
- Store loose tea light candles in small baskets or bins, and keep taper candles in cutlery organizers. Place candlesticks in the freezer to remove old wax.
- Sort fine dinnerware by type (dinner plate, salad plate, bowl). Check for chips or cracks. (If needed, go online to find dealers who specialize in dinnerware replacement.) Store pieces by type in sturdy canvas or quilted containers. Place small pieces of fabric or paper between pieces for protection.
- Polish any tarnished silver and wrap each piece in acid-free paper or store them in boxes designed to store silver. Sort your serving pieces and store like items together by material (glass/crystal, ceramic/pottery, wood, and silver).