

two ways to declutter

These top methods of organization can help you increase efficiency and conquer your most cluttered spaces—once and for all.

WRITER Sarah Wolf PHOTOGRAPHER Jacob Fox PRODUCER Brian Kramer

BEFORE

Looks can be deceiving. This desk, *left*, may look neat and tidy, but it makes frequently used items difficult to access.

PROBLEM Wall cabinets are a decent spot for storing magazines, but a cardboard bin (1) makes retrieving items at the bottom difficult. A clock (2) is used daily, but it's placed too high to see easily while seated. A letter tray and document envelopes (3) put time-sensitive bills out of sight. Unlabeled binders and containers (4) give no hint of their contents.

PROBLEM On the wall, a single-week calendar (5) isn't as useful as a monthly calendar, which is currently buried under notebooks on the desktop. Magnetic containers (6) of oft-used supplies are hard to open.

PROBLEM A decorative container of tape and a clothespin-style holder (7) take up too much desktop space. The catchall tray and pencil cup (8) are full of excess supplies and items that don't belong here.

PROBLEM Archive boxes (9) of mementos and photos are rarely needed but take up prime real estate. A closed file box (10) restricts access to frequently used documents.



METHOD #1 ABCD

Professional organizer Lorie Marrero introduced us to ABCD, a way of prioritizing both items and their storage spots. Begin by sorting items into four groups: A items are used daily; B items are used weekly or monthly; C items are used rarely or seasonally; and D items are seldom or never used. Then identify storage locations for each level: A-level spots are at eye level and in the open (your desktop, for example); B-level spots require minor effort to reach (in a drawer or in a container); C-level spots are less accessible (high shelves); and D-level spots are completely removed (a bookcase, a closet, or even another room).

AFTER



With this new setup, the work area is neat and tidy—and everything is right where you need it.

MAKE IT VISIBLE A vertical sorter (11) lets you quickly find B-level magazines. A letter sorter (12) stands up envelopes, with unpaid bills in the front. The clock (13) can now be seen easily from the desk chair. Labels and clear containers (14) indicate and show off B-level contents.

PUT IT ON DISPLAY The A-level calendar (15) moves from desktop to wall. A corkboard (16) shows off important notes that were once grouped in the decorative clothespin.

ADD SPACE A riser (17) adds another level for A-level items in an A-level spot. Streamlined A-level writing utensils are corralled and sorted in a divided pencil cup.

TIDY YOUR DESK Lidless bins and file boxes (18) allow easier access to B-level supplies. A shredder (19), because it's used regularly, assumes a B-level spot. Stacked boxes behind the shredder (20) are fine for C-level office supplies.

BEFORE



This desk drawer, left, shows a good first attempt at organization, but items need to be edited and made more accessible.

PROBLEM A one-compartment tray (1) holds a jumble of office supplies. Even if the items were sorted, there's no way they would ever stay in place.

PROBLEM A full-size stapler sits on the desktop, which makes this mini version (2) redundant.

PROBLEM Lidded canisters (3) add unnecessary steps to getting at frequently used items like pushpins and rubber bands.

PROBLEM Stacking items underneath other objects (4), especially in a drawer, makes them hard to spot and access.

PROBLEM This desk has only two drawers, and neither is the right home for crafts supplies (5).

PROBLEM Without labels, who knows where any of these objects truly belong?

"The SIMPLE method is all about acting and staying positive rather than overthinking or worrying."

—KATHY JENKINS, PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZER

METHOD #2 SIMPLE

Rather than making sporadic decisions about what to keep and where to store things, the SIMPLE method from professional organizer Kathy Jenkins guides you through a structured, six-step process. As a bonus, you can remember the steps with this handy acronym: S—sort like with like; I—identify what to keep; M—make a home for it; P—put it in containers; L—label it; and E—establish a routine.

Thanks to smart containers and a more efficient organizing system, this drawer's contents are always within easy reach.

SORT Colored pencils (6) are separated from regular pens and pencils, which move to the desktop.

IDENTIFY KEEPERS Only one pencil sharpener and bottle of correction fluid (7) remain. Unnecessary multiples just clutter small spaces.

MAKE A HOME A designated spot (8) positions frequently used index cards for grab-and-go ease. A rubber band keeps the cards tidy and easy to transport.

PUT IT IN CONTAINERS Interlocking trays (9) let you choose the perfect compartment for every object you store. A closed case (10) corrals markers that this user frequently takes in her bag.

LABEL IT An adhesive label (11) indicates the contents of this opaque marker case.

ESTABLISH A SYSTEM This user now evaluates the contents and condition of her desk drawers once a month. She set a reminder on her phone for the same day every month to reinforce her new habit.

RESOURCES BEGIN
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AFTER

