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GET ORGANIZED FOR FALL

SYSTEMS IN PLACE, STRESS IN CHECK

31 pro tips to control your clutter

6 modern make-ahead casseroles

16 secrets to strengthening your marriage

and 9 hilarious Halloween
costumes



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A month of mini organizing moves

Getting your home in top-to-bottom order doesn't have to be a whole to-do. Just tackle one small task a day, and by the time November rolls around, every spot should be neat, clean, and clutter-free.

Written by
Stephanie Sisco
Illustrations by
Naomi Elliott



ORGANIZING

DAY 1

CANCEL JUNK MAIL WITH A COUPLE OF CLICKS

TO PUT A PERMANENT END TO THE AVALANCHE OF CATALOGS AND CREDIT-CARD OFFERS, DOWNLOAD THE PAPERKARMA APP (\$2 A MONTH, PAPERKARMA.COM). SNAP A PICTURE OF EACH UNWANTED PIECE OF MAIL (MAKE SURE YOUR ADDRESS IS SHOWING), HIT SEND, AND THE APP WILL INSTANTLY UNSUBSCRIBE YOU (YES!) FROM THOSE MAILING LISTS.

DAY 2

CLEAR OFF A SURFACE IN MINUTES

Quick fix for paper pileups: Scan a room and notice where bills, school forms, and takeout menus have accumulated. That's where you're naturally inclined to keep that stuff. Mount a storage rack on the wall above and you can keep it all there without cluttering the counter. (RS pick: Wall Pockets, \$13 for two, containerstore.com.)

DAY 3

CORRAL LOOSE COUPONS AND STORE CREDITS

You're more likely to cash them in if you keep coupons and credits together in one spot that's easy to access when you're shopping—and that spot is the car. Use a clear zippered envelope tucked inside the overhead visor. (RS pick: Zip Closure envelope, \$1.80, jampaper.com.)

DAY 4

CREATE A "BEST OF" PHOTO FOLDER

Start a "favorites" album on your phone or computer, labeled by year, and regularly move your top pictures there as you take them. This will save time and hassle when you need to choose images for a class project, a gift book for family members, or a photo montage for a birthday.

DAY 5

CLEAN UP YOUR BOARD-GAME COLLECTION

They're bulky, and the mangled cardboard boxes can be an eyesore on living-room shelves. A neater way to contain the games: Slot a dozen of them into a hanging fabric shelf system in a hall closet. (RS pick: Hanging 4 Shelf closet organizer, \$25, greatusefulstuff.com.)

THE EXPERTS

ERIN ROONEY DOLAND, Reston, Virginia–based author of *Unclutter Your Life in One Week*.

ELLEN MADERE, Old Lyme, Connecticut–based organizer.

ANDREW MELLEN, New York City–based organizer and author of *Unstuff Your Life!*

BETH ZEIGLER PENN, Los Angeles–based organizer.

STACEY PLATT, New York City–based organizer and author of *What's a Disorganized Person to Do?*

BARBARA REICH, New York City–based organizer and author of *Secrets of an Organized Mom*.

JOHN TROSKO, Los Angeles–based organizer and blogger at organizingia.com.

LISA ZASLOW, New York City–based organizer.

DAY 6

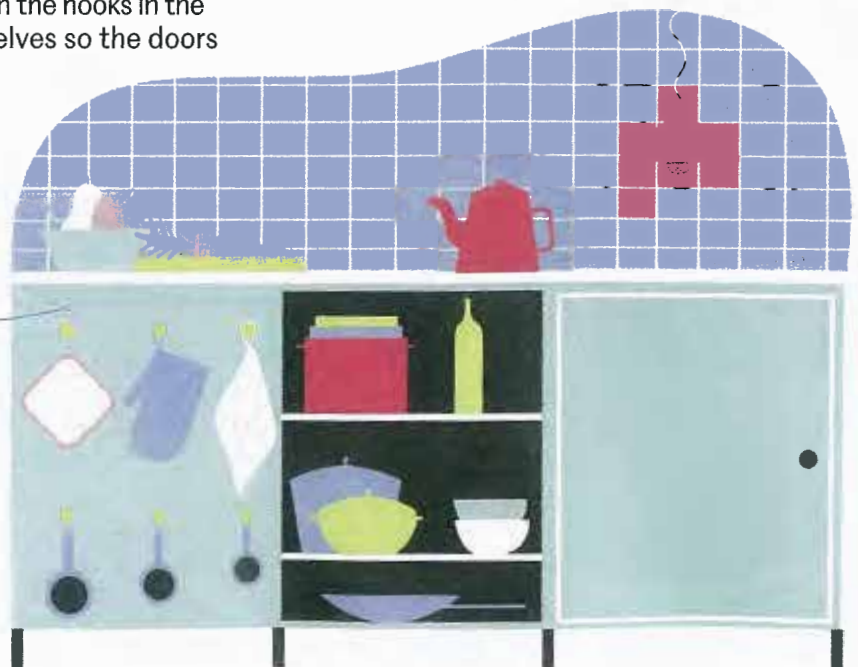
PUT SOME KITCHEN SUPPLIES ON HOOKS

Measuring spoons, whisks, and pot holders are the types of tools that jam up kitchen drawers. Instead of cramming them in, hang them on 3M Command hooks on the insides of cabinet doors. (Position the hooks in the spaces between the shelves so the doors can close properly.)

DAY 7

STORE SHOES TOE TO HEEL

Flipping one shoe leaves room to fit more pairs, so you won't have an overflow hogging the closet floor. Another space saver: Add inserts to boots to prevent toppling. (RS pick: *Real Simple* Boot Tongs, \$10 for two, bedbathandbeyond.com.)



ORGANIZING

DAY 8

START A RETURNS BIN

A MEDIUM-SIZE BASKET PLACED RIGHT NEXT TO THE FRONT DOOR IS MORE THAN JUST A DROP SPOT FOR LIBRARY BOOKS YOU'VE READ, TOOLS YOU'VE BORROWED FROM A NEIGHBOR, AND CLOTHING PURCHASES YOU'VE CHANGED YOUR MIND ON. IT'S A VISUAL PROMPT REMINDING YOU TO BRING THAT STUFF BACK (TODAY!).

DAY 9

MOUNT A MINI DRYING RACK

Have a standard-size rack that practically blocks the laundry-room doorway? Swap it out for a telescoping closet valet rod that you can install on the underside of an overhead cabinet. It's there when you need it, and it tucks out of the way when you don't. (RS pick: Pull-out valet rod, \$19, overstock.com.)

DAY 10

STREAMLINE YOUR WALLET

If you're bogged down with store reward cards, it's time to go digital. Download the CardStar app (free, CardStar.com), take a photo of each card and upload it, then toss the hard copy. When you're at the store, the bar codes can be scanned at checkout.

DAY 11

"FILE" COOKWARE

Instead of shoving skillets and lids in wherever they fit (cabinet chaos!), store them in a filelike organizer. (RS pick: Rubbermaid Pan Organizer, \$17, amazon.com.) It can also keep sheet pans and cutting boards in check.

DAY 12

MAGNETIZE THE LITTLE THINGS

Tired of losing bobby pins, tweezers, and nail scissors in the back of a drawer or the bottom of a toiletry bag? Solution: Attach them to a magnetic strip adhered to the inside of the medicine-cabinet door. (RS pick: Flexible magnetic strip, \$1 a foot, dickblick.com.)

DAY 13

GIVE UNDIES SOME ORDER

Dividers are the unsung heroes of the undergarment drawer. When you can easily contain and find bras and underwear in a grid instead of hunting through a mish-mash, the morning rush gets a lot easier. (RS pick: Slotted Interlocking drawer organizers, \$6 for three, containerstore.com.)

DAY 14

SORT BATTERIES THE WAY THE DRUGSTORE DOES

IMAGINE HAVING TO DIG THROUGH A BOX AT THE STORE TO FIND THE RIGHT SIZE BATTERIES TO BUY. WHY IS THIS YOUR SETUP AT HOME? A WALL-MOUNTED ORGANIZER INSIDE THE UTILITY CLOSET WILL KEEP AAA'S, C'S, AND D'S SEPARATE AND VISIBLE. (RS PICK: RANGE KLEEN BATTERY STORAGE, \$26, WAYFAIR.COM/RSBATTERY.)

DAY 15

DOUBLE YOUR CLOSET SPACE

Attach a trapeze-style second rod to your existing rod to store pants below tops instead of squishing them in all together. For a standard-size closet, choose one that's three feet wide, to leave room for hanging dresses on the side. (RS pick: Double Hang Commercial Grade closet rod, \$15, bedbathandbeyond.com.)





DAY 16

MOVE WORK GLOVES TO A WINE RACK (YES, A WINE RACK)

Hang the rack on a pegboard in the garage. It's just the right size to hold gloves, flashlights, and other odds and ends currently strewn all over your work bench.

DAY 17

GIVE YOUR DESK AN IN-BOX

SEEMS BASIC, BUT THE BEST WAY TO RESCUE A BURIED DESK IS TO FUNNEL PAPERS INTO ONE MANAGEABLE STACK THAT YOU CAN DEAL WITH ON A REGULAR BASIS. AT THE SAME TIME EACH WEEK—SAY, EVERY SUNDAY NIGHT BEFORE BED—TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO GO THROUGH ALL THE DOCUMENTS AND FILE, TOSS, OR SHRED UNTIL THE IN-BOX IS BLISSFULLY EMPTY.

DAY 18

SET BOUNDARIES FOR HANDBAGS

Install shelf dividers to keep them upright and eliminate purse pileups. (RS pick: Axis shelf dividers, \$20 for two, amazon.com.) Can't fit all your bags in that space? Consider this your cue to downsize.

DAY 19

PUT A PET ZONE IN YOUR PANTRY

Unused floor space is a prime spot for dog food and treats; transfer them from their packaging to rolling containers that fit there. Clear ones make it easy to see when it's time to restock. (RS pick: Iris airtight pet-food container combo, \$23, bedbathandbeyond.com.)

DAY 21

ORGANIZE E-BILLS (ALMOST) INSTANTLY

Download the FileThis app (free, FileThis.com) and you can gather all your financial docs in one spot, so you can quickly access them anywhere (like at the bank, when you're discussing your mortgage). Select the institutions you want the app to collect from, enter your usernames and passwords, and your statements will download to a secure cloud.

DAY 20

STRUCTURE THE UNDER-THE-SINK SPACE

That area under a kitchen or bathroom sink is typically a jumbled mess because of the awkward pipes. The fix: Install a two-tier pullout shelf that fits around the pipes to turn the area into a tidier one for cleaning products, cloths, sponges, and more. (RS pick: Under-sink sliding organizer, \$68, homedepot.com.)



DAY 22

GIVE YOURSELF AN OUT

Let's be real: You can't have everything in its place every moment of the day. But you can cut down on wayward stuff by giving it a defined space. Place a large seagrass basket in a corner of the living room to stow plush toys or the random sweatshirt when you don't have time to run them upstairs. Just commit to a deadline (say, the next morning, when you're having coffee) to put the items back.

DAY 23

MAKE THE FRIDGE MORE FUNCTIONAL

Move condiments from the door to a lazy Susan on the middle shelf so you can find the soy sauce with a quick spin. Then turn that door space into a zone for grab-and-go snacks and beverages. Food on top, weightier drinks down below.

ORGANIZING

DAY 24

START A NEW STORAGE SYSTEM—AND TEST-DRIVE IT

Tackle one spot, like a linen closet, rearranging the shelves and marking them with sticky notes. Live with the system for a week and make adjustments as needed. When you're happy with the system, replace the notes with labels, which will motivate you to maintain it. (RS pick: Brother P-Touch PT-D200 label maker, \$40, officedepot.com.)

DAY 27

SHRINK THE KIDS' PUZZLE COLLECTION

The pieces may be tiny, but the boxes aren't. Diminish the bulkiness by "decanting" puzzles into zipper-style freezer bags. Cut out the full picture from the box to store along with the pieces.

DAY 28

CLEAN OUT YOUR KITCHEN TOOL DRAWER

IT TAKES MERE MINUTES TO ROUND UP DUPLICATE TOOLS. TEST THEM ALL, KEEP THE ONE THAT WORKS BEST, THEN DONATE OR TOSS THE REST. EXTRA CREDIT: MOVE RARELY USED PIECES (TURKEY BASTER, MELON BALLER) TO A BIN ON A HIGH SHELF.

MAKE FURNITURE WORK HARDER

It's easy to eke out extra storage by mounting a shelf on the side of a dresser (to display books in a kid's room) or adding hooks to the side of a kitchen island (to hang dish towels)

DAY 25

DAY 26

SWITCH TO A SLIMMER KEY CHAIN

THE ORBITKEY GETS RID OF JANGLING AND SCRATCHING BY KEEPING KEYS TIGHTLY CLAMPED TOGETHER. (BUT YOU CAN STILL FAN THEM OUT WHEN YOU NEED TO FIND ONE.) TO BUY: \$22, ORBITKEY.COM.

DAY 29

PARE DOWN YOUR PURSE

Tuck a clean, empty plastic sandwich bag into your handbag. When you find yourself with a chunk of idle time—waiting in a doctor's office, stuck on a long phone call—fill it up with non-essentials to trash or relocate later.



DAY 30

FREE UP THE BEDROOM CHAIR FOR—GASP—SITTING

Mounds of discarded jeans and tops on that seat make your bedroom a stressful spot. Place a freestanding valet behind the buried chair or in a corner of the room and you can neatly hang garments there instead. (RS pick: Mulig valet stand, \$13, ikea.com/us.)



DAY 31

TRY A CLOSET TIME-SAVER

Starting now, whenever you take out an article of clothing, put the empty hanger back at one end of the rod (the same end each time). Collecting them all in one spot keeps clothes neat and means never having to hunt for a hanger again.