

A white picket fence with pointed tops runs across the middle of the image. In the foreground, there are several tulips in shades of yellow and red. The background shows some bare tree branches and green foliage. The overall scene is bright and cheerful, suggesting a spring setting.

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Get Organized!

7 Habits Organized People Practice to Keep Their Homes In Order

As a practicing professional organizer since 1994, I am often cornered by people at parties, in the grocery store, and throughout the community who want to share with me their organizing challenges and feelings of being overwhelmed. I always tell them that being organized is a skill set that can be learned. In this column I share seven habits that organized people use to keep their homes organized; if you adopt these behaviors, your home can be organized, too!

1 Develop a Place for Everything

Establishing a “home” for every item in your house is important. If an object has a designated place where it “lives,” you, and the other members of your household, will always know where to find it. Possessions without a “home” often get abandoned somewhere—often on the kitchen counter, the dining room table, or in a corner—and start to look like clutter.

2 Put Things Back

In order to maintain a place for everything, it’s important to make sure things are returned to their established home after they’ve been used. Putting things back ensures both that your home stays organized, and that you can also find the item the next time you need it.

3 Decide to Decide

I once heard clutter defined as “postponed decision making.” To prevent piles of stuff from accumulating, to minimize stacks of paper, and to get donation items out of the door, organized people regularly and consistently make decisions. You need to decide where in your home something belongs; you need to decide to take action on any given piece of paper; you need to schedule time to get donation items to the charity of your choice.

4 Keep It Simple!

It’s human nature plain and simple—if it’s not easy, we’re not going to do it. Create a system that is simple, convenient and will work for you. If your filing cabinet

is on your third floor, and you open your mail in the kitchen, how often do you think those papers are going to get filed? The more steps it takes to complete a task, the less likely it is to get done.

5 Put It on Paper

There is an inverse relationship between how much something is on your mind, and how much you’re actually doing about it. It’s important to get things out of your brain and onto paper; this frees your mind to actually start working on the task. Write everything down—appointments, goals, task/project lists.

6 Use Containers

Containers set boundaries on the space that items can inhabit. Even in a junk drawer (yes, I believe every home should have one!), use containers or drawer inserts to separate items and make them easy to identify. Label containers so you know what the contents are. Containers include not only bins and baskets; rooms can be containers, too. Make sure you have enough containers to house all of your stuff; if not, chaos will develop.



7 Weed Constantly

Being organized is not a one-time event, but an on-going process. Organized people constantly evaluate what they have, they regularly get rid of items they don’t love, need or use, and when they buy a newer version or model, they don’t keep the older item it replaced. ▲