

January

Holiday Decorations

Take the time to review and think about your decorations with the next holiday in mind before you pack up everything. Ask yourself if you want to make any specific changes in the quantity, style or theme of your decorations for next year. If you do want to make some changes now is a perfect time to sort through and select things you want to pass on to someone else, sell or gift to a thrift store.

Box up the decorations and ornaments you plan to keep in like-groups (all table covering together, all ornaments together, all silk floral pieces together) and label the boxes. Use firm boxes; plastic boxes with tight lids work well by protecting the contents from crushing and moisture damage. Then store all the holiday decorations in one location so next year won't be a scavenger hunt to retrieve each of those beautiful and precious items.

File It ~ Don't Pile It!

Before the flow of the New Year mail floods your home prepare yourself and family with these survival tips:

- ~ Have two specific containers for incoming mail
 - One for Bills to Pay
 - One for Mail to review (assuming junk mail has already been tossed in recycle)
- ~ Set a specific time (each weekend, or 1 to 2 times a month) to pay the bills.
- ~ Set up files specifically for the New Year so there is a *place* for everything to file, not pile!
- ~ Start the new year with new file folders ~ they look nice and clean and it encourages you to keep the files neat.

February

Finish Filing

- ~ Purge the files and keep what you need for tax purposes. (go to web for 'paper retention' for guidelines. Actively ditch the dispensable daily.
- ~ Look for filing systems already set up in your local office supply store or go online Check out File Solutions® and the Smead Straight-Line Filing at www.smead.com. Limit the number of file categories to fit *your* lifestyle. Large general categories could suggestions: Personal, Financial, Tax & Insurance and Lifestyle with many subcategories. Avoid a file folder of every topic and no major categories in your filing system.
- ~ Simplify your office supplies. First, reduce the quantity to what you actually use in your desk drawers; one of each item. Set up your own 'supply drawer or shelf' to collect all the office supplies in one place. Toss dried up, broken, old-never used things that are just clogging a simplified system.
- ~ Once organized ~ Plan to Maintain by setting aside time each week to get your work area and files back in order if the week has been too busy to keep up.
- ~ Archive files and records (need access to 1 or 2 times a year, or tax records) could be kept in a location farther away from the office area, for instance, the garage in a small file cabinet or well-marked boxes.

March

Closet Secrets

The key principles of a good closet design regardless of the size are:

1. **Visibility:** see what you have.
2. **Accessibility:** reach what you need.
3. **Flexibility:** changes with your wardrobe.

A good closet addresses hanging clothes, folded pieces, shoes and accessories. Begin with the **PURGE**.

- ~ Remove all out-dated, stained, torn, missing buttoned items along with things that no longer fit or are not the right color for you.
- ~ Sort through accessories. Keep what you love and wear regularly.
- ~ Bless others by giving away clothing and accessories you no longer wear.

Starters:

- ~ Group all like items together (slacks, jeans, shirts, skirts, jackets, blouses, dresses). Now you can see just how many pieces you actually have. Wear what is in your closet!
- ~ Accessories: Use it or lose it. If you seldom use or wear an accessory be ruth**LESS** and get rid of it! Baskets or transparent tubs are good for storing extra purses. Hooks are good for belts you actually wear. See-through hanging compartments are good for hosiery.
- ~ Shoes should be on a shoe-rod, the door or floor. Try to keep only the shoes you wear daily on the floor to make vacuuming easier.
- ~ Make extra space in the closet by putting out-of-season clothing in storage bags under the bed or tubs with lids high on shelves.
- ~ Double rods create extra room.

April

Central Supplies

(Home - Office - School)

Think of a hotel or hospital to understand this concept. Have each category of supplies in one central location for everyone in the household to be able to retrieve items as needed. This keeps taking inventory easier and saves time hunting and money making extra unnecessary purchases. For example, all the supplies needed for the bathroom could be kept on a shelf or two (all the extra soap, shampoo, disposable razors, toilet paper, tissues, tooth paste, deodorant, you get the idea).

~ A shelf (or a portion of a shelf)

- for all the extra towels
- shelf for all the extra sheets
- Beach towels on a shelf
- Medical supplies
(group like-items in a translucent plastic container and labeled)
topical antibiotics, cold meds, bandages & tape, topical ointments, thermometers w/sleeve, stomach relief etc.)
- Home office supplies in addition to what is needed at the desk (sticky pads, staples, paper clips, tape, computer paper, markers, pens for examples)
- Cleaning supplies - any extras not in the plastic tub under each sink in bathrooms and kitchen)
- Mobile tub for supplies often needed for school projects. It can be taken to areas of the home to do the project then placed back on the shelf.

May

Bathrooms

(Organized & Countertops Clutter-free)

Reminder: When sorting through everything, keep what you actually use on a daily, weekly and/or monthly basis. KEEP what is USED.

~ Consider placement & groupings. **You assign** what lives on the countertops. If you assign a place for everything in a drawer or in the cabinet then it will be simple to put the item away after **each** use. Only a few lovely or important things will be continually on the countertop.

Don't allow *stuff* to be stuffed in the drawers or cabinet. Think about how often each item is used then:

- Group hair care items together in a drawer or tub under the sink.
- Group daily make-up items in an acrylic container in a top drawer; special occasion make-up can be in a separate container towards the back of the drawer.
- Group facial cleansers, moisturizers, etc. in a container to pull out and use then put it right back in its permanent place.
- Group bathroom cleaning products in a tub and place it under the sink.
- Group feminine products in a container in a drawer or under the sink.

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June

Garage

(Park cars inside, see the floor, walk across floor!)

1. Sort through everything. Keep those things you actually use. Give away, toss, sell, and recycle items you no longer use or need. Do it now! Don't let it build up over the years and decades then leave it to your children to deal with using their vacation time or time off work without pay. They will bless you for doing the work!

2. Categorize the items you still need:

Small tools

Large tools

Gardening tools

Sports gear

Recreation gear

Painting supplies

Auto supplies

Canning supplies

Special occasion large entertainment pieces

Holiday decorations

Recycle and waste containers

These are some ideas; please add your own.

3. Use the floor to ceiling space and the ceiling for storage.

4. Store least often used items that are not too heavy higher on the wall.

5. Keep frequently used items at eye level or easy reach.

6. If possible, keep the bottom 4 to 6 inches clear of everything to make cleaning up easier and quicker.

7. Keep safety in mind for all storage.

8. Keep items in view with shelving.

9. Cabinetry will keep items out of sight when needed.

10. New track/rail systems allow for greater versatility and optimizes the use of all space.

11. Ceiling is great for hanging ladders, snowboards/skies with boots attached.

12. Pegboard with hooks above and around the tool bench keeps tools visible and easily accessible. Shelving containers with little drawers hung on the pegboard puts nails, screws and other small items within easy reach.

July

Organizing Tips

Organizing tips for everyone, especially those with CHAOS (Can't Have Anyone Over Syndrome).

Begin with and cling to the **goal of a simpler life** in your home and office. These tips help with our present lives but also apply to any opportunity to downsize.

1. Give yourself permission to lighten your load of accumulated stuff, even if it includes items gifted to you but you find yourself just **storing** them now.
2. It will take **many sweeps** through closets, drawers, cupboards and every room to identify what you truly want and **need** so begin the process soon. This month would be good.
3. Begin now to share and **bless others** with items and treasures you no longer **use or need**. There is great joy in the act of giving.
4. The favored **order of giving and gifting** others with your 'stuff' is give to family first, then friends, and then charities. This can be followed with an estate sale when downsizing.
5. Have an **interior designer** help you in selecting and placing furniture in just-the-right-location and arrangement for your new less-cluttered look.
6. Try to think **multi-functional** if your space is limited or if some rooms are seldom used (office in part of the living room or bedroom-especially when downsizing).

August

Creating Clutter Free Kids Tips

1. Begin early to teach children how to organize. Toys get put away each day in their 'permanent' place and 'like-toys' are grouped together in specific containers which can be cardboard boxes. Examples of toy groupings are: trucks, blocks, Legos, dress-up clothes, craft supplies, character or action figures, stuffed animals, cars and tracks, play tools, dolls.
2. Sort-determine what each child has that is currently age-appropriate. Store items until the child is ready to use and have fun. If too many toys then box up and rotate and consider donating to children less fortunate. Take your children along to model giving, it makes sharing easier for them.
3. Box up outgrown clothing and toys that need to be saved for siblings.
4. Arrange zones by activity in the bedroom, that keeps organizing and pick up simpler. Examples of zones: Sleep ~ bed & bookshelf, Study ~ desk, supplies, books, Floor ~ open shelves, Dressing ~ dresser, shoes, accessories)
Zones in a play area outside the bedroom can be divided up with the boy(s) could have one side of a wall or room and the girl(s) could have the other side. Toys ~ open shelves with bins or tubs for 'like-toys', Arts & Crafts ~ open shelves, desk, table.

September

Back to School Tips

Family Organizing: Use a large calendar to keep track of each family member's activities; make a staging area for each child to gather supplies at night for quick pick up and take-off for school the next morning; prepare for the onslaught of school papers by having in-box trays; have a chart for after school chores for 5 - 15 minutes per child; plan after-school-snacks and group in tub in refrigerator or pantry; pre-select outfits each night to make the morning flurry less hectic, teach the children how to plan their days by making appropriate time for activities/sports/sleep/study/chores/relaxing time.

Sort-Toss-Arrange ~ wonderful lifelong habit to develop!
Continually be reviewing what is being used or what is needed by sorting. Toss is a quick way to say remove by throwing away, donating, recycling, or selling things no longer used or needed. Then group remaining things together that are used for a similar purpose:

School supplies ~ on a shelf or tub

All clothing ~ in closet and dresser sorted by groups (slacks, jeans, skirts, blouses, shirts, dresses, accessories)

Books ~ on shelves, library books kept in basket for quick retrieval, never lost!

Toys ~ see August

Memorabilia ~ some displayed, some stored in decorative boxes with lids to view easily, collect no dust, avoids the cluttered look. End of school year review and reduce the quantity to a few precious memories.

Study Space ~ Build study skills that will last a lifetime!

1. Desk per child, chair, lamp, clock, calculator, scissors, white-out, tape, pen & pencils, bookends, ruler, stapler, dictionary, markers, pencil sharpener, bulletin board.
2. Start early with a simple filing system.
3. Contain art & project supplies.
4. Organize extra desk supplies in a bin or tub on a shelf.

October

Kitchen Organizing

Everything with a place and a purpose™

Goals: organized, efficient, countertops without clutter.

Sort ~ Look at everything to determine if the item is beyond old, damaged, or never used;

Toss (actually throw away, recycle, give away or sell) those items no longer needed or used in the kitchen;

Arrange ~ based on the frequency of use, put items away in groups used for the same or similar purpose, i.e.

Daily used items within the triangle of the sink, stove and refrigerator;

Weekly used items within triangle if there is room but also just outside the triangle,

Monthly used items probably outside the triangle and/or on the upper shelves or in the pantry,

Seasonal items up high and/or in another room altogether (bedroom closet, garage, pantry)

Generate your own personal list of categories and items to be placed in the kitchen after sorting and tossing: i.e.

Under sink (used on daily or weekly basis)

Daily dishes & glassware & cups & flatware

Lazy Susan or 21" round

Knives, Pitchers

Traveling coffee/tea mugs

Pots & pans; Large Utensils; Cereals

Bread, Plastic wraps, Fine glasses,

Serving Platters, Bowls,

Coffee, tea, liners

Placemats, Cookbooks, Medicines

And More!

Create your own Baking Center ~ flours, sugars, spices, oils, baking soda & powder, cake decorating items, trays, cookie sheets, pie plates, muffin tins, cake pans, plus . . .

Create your own Butler's Pantry for entertaining ~ fine dinnerware & glasses, large trays & bowls, vases, candles, centerpieces, napkin rings, plus . . .

November

Holiday Planning

Begin the month with joy by giving! Take all the boxed and canned goods in your pantry and shelves with current freshness dates to the local food bank. Stock their shelves when the need is higher. It also motivates you to purge our pantry.

Get out a calendar dedicated to the two last months of the year. Use one page for each month so you can see at a glance the big picture. Begin entering all the planned activities; use pencil to facilitate changes in scheduling.

Start a menu and shopping list for all the events where food will be needed. Stock up on non-perishable groceries that will last through the end of the year. Purchase necessary paper products and decorating essentials like candles.

Have a gift-giving list with each person's name and budget amount for a gift as well as notes for gift ideas. Set a goal for when the entire gift shopping needs to be completed and any special shipping dates to be met.

Decorate the exterior of the home before month's end but not necessarily use the lighting until next month.

Purchase, address and stamp all the greeting cards.

Set up a table for gift wrapping with all the supplies that will be needed. The supplies can be kept under the table to all maximum space for wrapping. Avoid the time consuming task along with all the other holiday activities by wrapping early and in small quantities.

December

Keep the Holiday Joy

- > This is an especially busy time of the year so consider just how many functions really need to be attended.
- > What is most important to you and your family to remember after the holidays?
- > Would simpler be OK? How extravagant does each event or activity actually need to be?
- > It is OK to call for help! (cleaning, catering, take-out)
- > Hire a mommy's helper to watch children while you are at home.
- > Ask yourself if it is necessary to:
 - Work nonstop for 20 hours each day?
 - Have all your cookies homemade?
 - Your home be the loveliest in the neighborhood?
 - Be in a holiday play, have all the shopping done before November, have 25 people over for Christmas eve and 50 people on Christmas day?

Holiday Time-Saver-Tips

1. Simplify meals and eat together as a family.
2. Have a simple menu plan that interchanges days.
3. Decide what is most important to do.
4. Have a total-family pick-up each night.
5. Wrap gifts each day @ a wrapping dedicated wrapping table.
6. Stay rested; Get to bed on time.
7. Enlist help with every job if possible.
8. Be thankful for any and all help from the family and let them know it!
9. Be generous with praise to salespeople.
10. Listen to holiday music often.
11. Pray before shopping.
12. Stay focused on the reason there is a celebration at this time of the year!!!