

Tips for Maintaining A Clutter Free Space

1. Don't just put it down! Put it away! It may take a slightly longer amount of time now but the extra effort to put each and every item (or even 95%) where it goes, will save hours and hours of time hunting, sorting, and storing away later.
2. Keep the commitment to yourself to spend your set amount of time each day - whether 10, 15, or 20 minutes at a time that works for you - making progress with your organizational goals. This is critical as you begin to develop new, good organizational habits. Similar to scheduling exercise as you begin a workout plan, you must protect your new way of working.
3. Designate spaces that are dedicated for dropping your bags or keys and leaving your shoes when you come in the door. The kitchen island or dining room table isn't meant for your clutter. If you can, buy cubbies, hooks, and special bowls to place inside the door for belongings like loose change, keys, and family members' "wearables".
4. Kids bring a huge amount of artwork in the house each week. Instead of keeping and storing each piece, choose a few pieces to frame or highlight somehow. All the rest, you can photograph and then upload to a website that can make a hard-bound book for each student each school year!
5. It's nice to stock up when items are on sale but purchasing a big lot at one time can take other tolls: 1) Money is money and even if you use the item long term, you still need the money NOW to make the purchase. So, is it really a good deal if you need \$50 to buy a large number of something on sale, if you can really only afford \$10 at this time? 2) Buying and storing a large bulk inventory of something can take a psychic toll on us when it creates extra clutter and "stuff" to find space for. It's not necessarily bad to stock up but do so with caution not abandon!
6. Beware the wholesale club stores! While these membership organizations can offer some good benefits for the wallet and for the pantry, there is a false sense of financial wisdom gained by shopping there. One can easily get lulled into buying well more than intended upon arrival. This happens either because you buy more quantity than you need at those stores - which of course, costs more but which you are convinced is a better deal - even though you don't need it - or because you regard the items featured on the sales floor as "limited time opportunities" - as you are intended to.
7. Here's my rule on junk drawers: each home is allowed ONE - usually in the kitchen. I also think this junk drawer needs to be sorted and cleaned out at least twice per year. A good item to have in the junk drawer is an organizer tray with compartments so that the items in the drawer can be sorted by type (i.e. tape, glues, sticky pads...).
8. As has been stated previously, a place for all things, and all things in their place. A great goal is to have set places for your things where you put them when you take them off, stop using them,

or finish the task. Average time estimates for people to spend looking for list items range from 30-55 minutes per day - or up to about 15 days per year! Visualize your free time as you spend the extra time now putting things right.

9. As a family set up several times each year to purge items and then donate or sell (or both) no-longer-needed items. A good time to do this might correspond with the change of seasons when you are already thinking of spring cleaning and yard sales or holiday shopping and decorating. It can feel so good to open the windows, purge items you no longer need and find new ways to use that freed-up space!

10. Invest in some good, solid closet options and shelves for storage - in the garage or the basement. While you may not be able to afford to add on or expand your closet space or even to have custom closet systems build, you can buy wooden or metal shelves from a hardware store, like Lowes or Home Depot, or home furnishings store, like Ikea. They are well-worth the money. Then invest in clear, plastic bins with lids from a similar place to sort, label, and store your items. You won't regret your investment.

11. When you build your shelves and set up your bins, include several areas for the following: holiday gifts, gift wrapping supplies, items to sell, items to donate, cleaning supplies, books to get rid of. These are items that tend to get scattered around, put aside till later, or end up not being where you need them to be. For example, when you finish a book, decide immediately if you are going to keep it or give it away. If giving it away (e.g. to library to sell), place it in the "books to get rid of" box right away. You won't have to look at it again!