

# ORGANIZING TIPS

1. Designate a specific spot for things like keys and eyeglasses and get in the habit of always returning them there as soon as you walk in the door.
2. Go through your drawers and closets and for each item of clothing (and pair of shoes), ask yourself if you've worn it in the last year. If you haven't, sell it or donate it. Throw away any that are stained or torn beyond repair.
3. Once you've eliminated all the clothes you're not wearing, maintain your wardrobe by using the one-in, one-out rule: for every new article of clothing you get, an older item has to go.
4. As soon as your bills come in the mail, put them in one "bills to pay" holder or a tickler file. Then, mark your calendar or use the tickler file as a guide to know exactly when you have to pay each one. Say goodbye to those late fees!
5. Even kids can learn organizational skills if you give them the right tools. It's hard to come up with an excuse for not cleaning up if storage and shelving for their toys and books are sturdy, at the appropriate height, and easy to use. If there are just too many toys, help your kids decide what unused toys to donate to less fortunate children and, if age appropriate, have them come along when you do.
6. A little preparation at night can eliminate the morning rush: make lunches as you're cleaning up from dinner, set out clothes for each family member, and make sure all homework and forms (including your own) are signed and in their bags, ready to go.
7. Clear the office clutter one pile at a time. Sort papers and files into categories such as "shred", "file", "read", and "requires action." Then deal with each category, or schedule a time to complete longer tasks.
8. Once you've cleared out all the food that no one is eating, label your cabinet or pantry shelves by category (cans, cereals, baking, etc.) and make a grocery list template based on these categories. You'll be able to see when you're getting low on certain items and be less likely to overbuy. (Extra tip: don't shop when you're hungry)
9. Make your filing system simple, easy to use, and based on how you retrieve the information and files you need. Try using color-coded hanging file tabs, limiting the number of categories, and don't make a file for each piece of paper.
10. The mail and incoming papers need to go **somewhere**. Create an "info zone" in your kitchen or somewhere that makes sense for your family – label a desk tray, wall pocket, or file for each person, put the bills in their designated spot, and use a large calendar or dry erase board for marking all appointments and important news.

