

## Organizing 4 U's

# SIMPLE Organizing Steps

A few months ago I was fortunate to meet two very friendly and organized ladies. Both Muffy and JoEllen impressed me with their great personalities and diligent promotion of their service. Since then, we have created a nice partnership and we are selling their book in our e-store. Both Shari and I have a copy and we have found many good ideas to incorporate in our own lives, and we're sure you will too.



subject of organizing.

Professional Organizers Muffy Kaesberg and JoEllen Salkin founded **Organizing 4 U** in 2003. They assist individuals who are overwhelmed by clutter in their homes and offices by providing hands-on organizing and transferring skills to *make life simple*. In 2008 they published *Where Can I Find It?*©, a book designed assist individuals in identifying their various important documents, and a tool to help others in the event of an emergency. They have provided their expertise to a variety of local and national media, and offer a number of talks on the

In 2009 **Organizing 4 U** created an acronym for SIMPLE to assist in the organizing process. These tips will guide you through any organizing project, and when followed will *keep* you organized.

### “S” - START SMALL

This is the first tip from our *SIMPLE Organizing Steps* mantra....every project should start out small and gain momentum!

Overwhelmed and don't know where to start? Choosing the place to start is hard for some people - try imagining which area would give you the most peace to have cleared out, and then start with a single spot.

The place you begin might be a drawer, closet or pile of paper on the desk. Once cleared, move around the room, tackle another small area, and before you know it, mission accomplished!

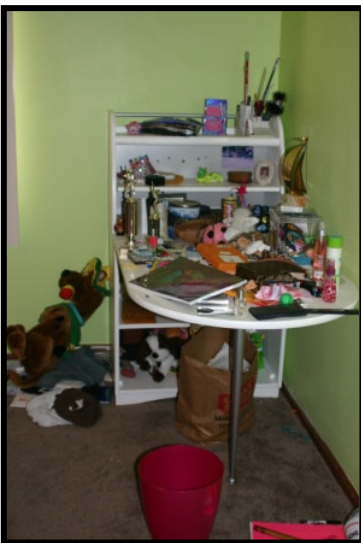
**T**rouble staying on task? Try setting an egg timer for 15 or 30 minutes at a time. During that time you work on the project and don't leave the room! As you find items that belong in other areas of your home or office, put them in a box and deliver them after the timer goes off! A small cupboard like the one pictured here should take less than 30 minutes---including the installation of the lid and/or a bag holder on the inside of the door.



Many people find it easier to work on organizing projects with someone who will re-enforce staying on task and can make the project more fun. If you have a friend or relative who is willing to help, give that a try.

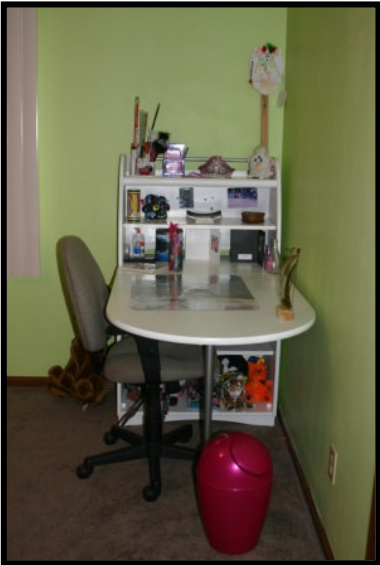


## “T” - IDENTIFY CATEGORIES



**W**e suggest that you empty the contents from the space, spread them all out and begin to group them into categories. This teenager's desk is a perfect candidate for a reorganization project!!

After the initial “dump”, it’s time to identify categories. In other words, *place like things together*. As you can see from these photos of a teenager’s desk and its contents, this is often the messiest part of the process!



However, keep in mind that eventually, the desk is going to look as nice and neat as you see here. It’s all about the end result!

**I**n the kitchen begin by grouping food products into logical categories: the rice products, the soups, and the teas. Use the same concept when grouping spices, baking tools and utensils. Placing spices next to the stove and dishes closest to the dishwasher are also great time savers.

If you are sorting through papers on your desk, then some typical examples of categories would be 'bills to pay', 'paid bills', and 'tax information'. Perhaps you need to have some action items close at hand for easy reference. These can be sorted by 'urgent', 'RSVPs', 'to read', and/or groupings of projects.

While working in your clothes closet, think about the categories that make sense to you when you are deciding what to wear. You may wish to group together all shirts or blouses, pants, and work clothes vs. casual wear. Many

people like to group by colors. If you have room, sort the clothes by season and the off season items can be stored in another locale.

We always say that becoming more organized is NOT about getting rid of things, but being able to FIND your things more easily the next time you need them. Grouping like items together, is a good first step to finding what you need at a moment's notice.

## “M” – MAXIMIZE YOUR SPACE

**O**ur goal as professional organizers is to help people use the space in their homes and offices most effectively.

Many home offices can improve space capacity with the addition of bookcases, a new and/or improved filing system and a system for long-term document retention. Think vertically when you enter the room and see how you might better utilize the space on the walls or in the closets.

Closets are a challenge for many home owners; they come in all shapes and sizes, often without sufficient storage. Maximize the space using higher shelves for out of season clothes, hats or handbags. Don't have any shelves? Try adding them! There are many products available to suspend extra shelves from the clothing rods.



**K**itchens are a fun place to be creative with storage while using your space effectively. There are many attractive containers for food and pantry items, baskets can be used for utensils, pots can be hung on racks from the ceiling and there are many varieties of spice racks to suit your needs. Clear containers are excellent for the refrigerator so the contents are identifiable!



The pull out shelves that we like to use in kitchens and offices are a cinch to install. Be sure that you measure first!

Garages, basements and attics are wonderful storage areas for items you do not need every day. Once again, think vertically when looking for extra space. Shelves which are suspended from the garage ceiling can dramatically increase the amount of storage. Sturdy shelving is available for basements or attics. We recommend using clear containers with labels so you can see what is in them with a quick glance.

Now is the time to:

### “P” – PUT AWAY

**A**t this point in the process you should be thinking about where to put your belongings and paper so they will be accessible the next time you decide to use them. After all, that is what being organized is all about----being able to find the things you need, when you need them.

Many individuals will ask us the 'right' place to store something. The only 'right' place is the one that makes sense to you. Therefore, we suggest that you think about how you will look for something the next time you need it, and select this locale as its new home. As an added tip, we suggest that items be stored in close proximity to where you will be using them.

For example, if you like to pay your bills at the kitchen table, then perhaps you should consider putting all the related information in a small portable tote. When finished, you can place everything inside, and still have a place for dinner.



If you are the type of person who will forget about a piece of paper or an article of clothing if you cannot see it, there are alternatives available. Check out your local office supply or department store for more visible storage solutions. Think outside of the box (so to speak).

We recommend that when you store important paperwork and documents, you tell someone you trust where the information is located. This could be a friend or family member, your attorney and/or your insurance agent. Then, in the event of an emergency, that someone will easily be able find what they need.

The **Organizing 4 U** team's book [Where Can I Find It?©](#) is a useful tool to guide you as you find homes for all of your important documents.

## “L” – LET GO

**S**ome people say the hardest part of organizing is letting go of things. Cable TV shows have families put all of their belongings on the front lawn and return only 1/2 to their homes. **Organizing 4 U** believes you should part with items which are no longer useful to you and no longer bring you joy! It does not always need to be half of your treasures.

How does one decide? Try sorting items in each space into 3 piles - trash, keep and donate. Share items you no longer need with those who do. Try keeping a donation bag or box handy and add to it on an ongoing basis - the next time a charity calls for a neighborhood pick up, you will be ready!

Feel the relief of lightening your load and "let go" of the excess. Peter Walsh, author of "It's All Too Much", believes our society encourages us to have too much "stuff". So join the fun and organize your home or office today. We guarantee the lighter load will make you feel better right away.

## “E” – ENJOY & MAINTAIN

...your re-organized space. Of course, *Enjoying* is the easy part! You should now be able to locate items more readily each time you need them. This translates to less stress and more free time to spend on activities that were neglected when you were overwhelmed with disorganization.

To *Maintain* your newly organized space, you will need to devote time on a regular basis to keeping it organized. This could be a few minutes returning items to their homes every morning or evening, or it could be some time when the entire family participates on a Saturday morning. The frequency and amount of time is up to you. We recommend that you set aside some time and mark it on your calendar.

By maintaining on a regular basis your spaces will stay organized with the investment of small amounts of time.

Like these tips? To receive free tips via email on a monthly basis visit [www.organizing4u.com](http://www.organizing4u.com). To view sources for products used in this article go to <http://www.organizing4u.com/favorite-products.php>.

**S**ee what I mean? I think Muffy and JoEllen could straighten up even the toughest mess! Hmm, maybe I should invite them to my shop after a week of making website projects!

**M**att



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