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# 101 WAYS TO ORGANIZE HOME AND FAMILY

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## **Part One: The Basics on Organizing, Simplifying, and Managing Your Household**

The following are general rules which I have found to be a great foundation for living an organized and simplified life. When I apply these basic principles to myself and family, managing the household becomes easier and the day-to-day activities flow more peacefully.

- Everything should have its own place. Avoid haphazardly throwing bags on the ground, paperwork in a massive pile, or bowls in overstuffed drawers. Find a home for everything.
- Teach and show your partner and kids how to organize so they will learn and know how the system works. They are members of the household unit and should also be accountable for maintaining it.
- Take care of business as it comes up. At the very least, take one step toward managing affairs, helping kids get started on a project, or resolving a problem in general.
- Insist on setting personal boundaries for your time, effort, money, and physical space. Speak with confidence and don't be afraid to ask others for what you need.
- Do not hoard or clutter your home with unnecessary items. Donate clothes that no longer fit, recycle old magazines that have been stacking up, and throw out stuff that is now considered trash.
- Stay focused on what you are presently doing to avoid mistakes or mishaps. When you are replaying a fight in your head or talking on the phone while trying to make dinner, accidents can happen. Take a deep breath and think about the here and now.
- Use plastic containers of all sizes for organization and neatness. Small bins can be placed in drawers for toiletries and kitchen items, and



large bins can be used to safely store decorations or precious mementos. Cardboard boxes may be cheaper, but they can also attract critters or allow moisture in. For the small containers without proper lids, either repurpose them, recycle the plastic, or store them in a separate place so they are not mixed up with ones that have their matching tops.

- Plan ahead and anticipate needs for upcoming events. Preparation and prevention is the key to maintaining the flow.
- Take advantage of convenience services such as automatic payments, direct deposit, telephone refills, and precooked meals.
- Own responsibility for your life and how you manage it. You are in control so avoid complications and drama. Keep it simple.
- If you are on a restrictive budget, only buy what you need. Do not feel obligated to purchase expensive holiday popcorn from your neighbor or another toy for your screaming child. You can set your own limits.
- Instead of procrastinating, just take action. Even one ounce of effort can generate momentum.
- Schedule personal down-time in order to feel refreshed and less overwhelmed.
- Set up a routine for day-to-day activities for you, family members, and your pets. Routines may be boring, but they become a necessity when running an efficient household.
- Listen to your intuition. If your gut instinct is telling you to grab a jacket before heading out, then grab a jacket before heading out. Your higher wisdom or guidance sends you little reminders all the time to help you avoid hassles or inconveniences. You just have to learn to listen and follow through.
- Discover what your baseline for “normal” and functional is and strive to maintain it daily.



- Do business with and surround yourself with people who are reliable and trustworthy. Research companies for dependable service personnel like housekeepers, contractors, or pest control companies. Know who you are dealing with. You want someone to show up when he or she is supposed to.
- Schedule priority appointments first in your planner, i.e. doctor visits, school plays, or meetings with bankers. Then as time allows, fill in openings with social or entertainment venues if you can handle them.
- Avoid multiple commitments to activities that require frequent or long-term promises. Know your capabilities and be realistic about what you are willing and able to do.
- Realize when improvement is needed. If your partner is frustrated because you don't ever spend time together or your child missed the bus three days in a row or you haven't had your teeth cleaned in two years, acknowledge that something needs to change.
- Be smart and play it safe. Risky or impulsive actions tend to create more drama and disorder. If you are looking to simplify and construct a more peaceful household, then use common sense. Teach your children how their behaviors affect outcomes and consequences. Love and respect yourself enough to do what serves you well.
- Every home is run differently. Create a system that works best for you and your family.

## **Part Two: 101 Ways to Organize Home and Family**

1. Print out or keep track of a budget list of recurring monthly bills. You can use columns and rows for service, company, estimated amount, and the designated month. As each bill is paid, check off the box as an indication that bills was received and payment was made.
2. If you own a dog, keep treats and baggies or tissues near the door so you can clean up afterwards and reward them as they return to come inside.



3. Reuse small plastic bags by storing them in your vehicle's compartment for when you need an emergency trash bag on a road trip.
4. Install a coat rack near your entryway so family members have a place to hang backpacks, lunch bags, jackets, hats, and umbrellas.
5. If your child's school collects cut-outs or package labels, designate a small box or bag in your kitchen and store them there until you are ready to turn them in for the fundraiser.
6. Make a copy of each child's school calendar and highlight dates as they pass so you can find your place more easily.
7. Create holiday bins according to the seasons of fall, winter, spring, and summer. Take out the bins from your attic or basement as the season begins and decorate as the holidays approach.
8. On Sunday, prepare snacks for five days at a time then grab and go during the week.
9. Use one bin or basket in the family room for pet toys and chews.
10. Have all family members lay clothes out the night before.
11. Put the phone numbers for your doctor, dentist, pharmacist, and veterinarian in your contact list.
12. If you are co-parenting with an ex-partner, make sure he or she has copies of your child's school and extracurricular activity schedules.
13. Designate a separate area from your own for your significant other's keys, wallet, and work related items.
14. Gather all paperwork and items that need to be taken care of for the upcoming week and place in a pile on Sunday near your purse or wallet.
15. Keep a running grocery list handy to jot down items you have to purchase. Tell your family members about it so they can also write down products they run out of or need.



16. Maintain a calendar or personal organizer to track you and your family's schedules.
17. After a haircut, dental visit, or doctor appointment, make your next appointment while you are checking out and mark it in your calendar.
18. Keep a laundry basket near the bathroom so all dirty clothes have a place to go.
19. Unsubscribe to email newsletters and magazines you no longer read.
20. Keep a bottle of bathroom cleaner in the bathroom cabinet to use on the spot when accidents happen.
21. Maintain a "parent pack" of supplies – tape, black marker, sewing kit, paper clips, safety pins, and hairbrush – in your car compartment.
22. Save at least one shoe box for each child for school and art projects.
23. Designate one cabinet in the house for arts and crafts supplies. Store paint, glitter, and ink pads high on a shelf until children are ready to use responsibly.
24. Read mail and go through school folders every day.
25. Keep stamps, tape, address labels, and envelopes in one place for doing bills and mail.
26. Store one broom on your front or back porch, one in your garage or shed, and one inside your pantry or utility room.
27. In addition to the bathrooms, leave a box of facial tissues in all kids' rooms, the kitchen, the family room, and your vehicle.
28. Invest in at least two shoe racks – one for indoor use and one for outdoor use for gear like boots and garden shoes.
29. Use a battery organizer to store a variety of batteries neatly.
30. Place outdoor toys in plastic bins with holes at the bottom to release rain water and easily wash out.



31. When an invitation comes, mark the date in your calendar and toss the paperwork if it's not needed.
32. Bring old checkbooks that are no longer used to their bank of origin for proper shredding.
33. Install outdoor hose hangers with compartments to organize hoses, nozzles, and sprinklers.
34. Go to one company for your basic car maintenance – oil change, filter replacement, battery check, and wiper installation.
35. Use a file cabinet with hanging folders and labels for all important paperwork and accounts. Throw away mail envelopes and unfold paperwork to letter size in order to save on space.
36. Get a snapshot of your finances by knowing your routine income and expenses, analyzing your net worth, and checking your credit report with credit score.
37. Designate a container or memory chest to store treasured items or mementos for each household member.
38. Put important original documents like birth certificates, passports, and social security cards in a portable fire proof safe.
39. Use only one drawer in the kitchen as the “junk” drawer for miscellaneous items.
40. Buy several key tags and loops to keep handy in order to label additional keys as you receive them.
41. Make extra copies of important documents like drivers' licenses, resumes', and vaccine records to have on file and ready when needed.
42. Store a pack of wet wipes in the driver's side door and in the back of your vehicle for kids to use.
43. Over the weekend, prepare a menu of dinners for the upcoming week.



44. Write down meal items needed on your grocery list before going shopping.

45. Fill up your gas tank on Sunday in order to be ready for the work or school week ahead.

46. Keep only daily use keys on your keychain. Label all others and store in drawer, car compartment, or cubby.

47. Maintain a variety of birthday or special occasion items like bows, bags, and tissue paper and store in one container.

48. Use a separate bin to keep a surplus of major holiday bags, ribbons, and wrapping paper.

49. Make sure all vehicles, boats, and trailers have current addresses so registration renewal does not lapse.

50. If you are happy and satisfied with a service technician or subcontractor, ask for his or her business card and put in your house file.

51. Make a list of all passwords and accounts for you, your partner, and older kids if they use the computer and social media.

52. Update beneficiaries on trusts, life insurances, or retirement accounts if your life status changes.

53. Keep battery charger cables, a mini tool kit, bottle of water, and a towel in the back or trunk of your car.

54. Clean out your pantry, refrigerator, and medicine cabinets and dispose of expired medications and food products.

55. Buy groceries one week at a time so food does not spoil. Keep basic snacks and quick meals handy for impromptu social visits.

56. Have kids bring dirty dishes to the sink and at least rinse them off so they don't sit with crusted food before being placed in the dishwasher.

57. Go online and check your state's treasury department for possible unclaimed property and money for you and adult family members.



58. Keep a small notebook and pen or smart phone at your bedside to record ideas that come up at night.
59. Use a vacuum that does not require filter bags.
60. Time house filter changes together, such as change water and air conditioner filters every three months.
61. Buy everyday kids' clothes that don't require special cleaning.
62. Designate one day per week for heavier household cleaning like stripping sheets, vacuuming, and mopping.
63. Keep kids' books to a minimum by using book trade stores, swapping out titles with friends, or going to the local library.
64. After you've admired their artistry, toss out children's artwork or projects that use perishable or messy media – noodles, sand, or glitter.
65. Store a compact umbrella, flashlight, and tape measure in your vehicle.
66. Anticipate needs and shop ahead of time for upcoming social gatherings. If your company has a food or drink preference, make sure you have the items they desire.
67. Stock a variety of light bulbs, including nightlight bulbs, in a cabinet or drawer.
68. Keep a few small waters, non-perishable snacks, and first aid kit in your vehicle.
69. Store coupons and restaurant take-out menus in the kitchen for quick access.
70. Use small organizing supplies like magnetic bag clips, paper clips, bungee cords, rubber bands, and wire ties to store items and wires neatly.
71. Have an extra set of travel size shampoo, conditioner, shaving cream, razor, toothbrush, toothpaste, and body wash in case you run out or someone unexpected visits.



72. Put daily use items like contact supplies, vitamins, and coffee on bathroom and kitchen counter tops for easy access.

73. Review and use warranties for repairs on major products and appliances including your air conditioner/heating system and your house itself before they expire.

74. If you have dogs and anticipate working late or being gone all day long, drop them off by the groomers for a bath and socialization.

75. Record your favorite television shows and movies to watch later.

76. Research and install smart phone apps that help make your life easier, less stressful, and more affordable.

77. If you use a monthly medicine on your pet, write it in your calendar and set up a recurring reminder.

78. Prepare a file with several important documents for your next of kin or whoever has power of attorney when you die or are incapacitated. Include wills, trusts, living wills, healthcare power of attorney, durable power of attorney, account numbers, and insurance information.

79. Sign up for online banking and check your accounts daily to keep them balanced and guard against identity theft.

80. Decline social engagements that you know will cause a major disruption for you and your family or if you are uncomfortable with the circumstances.

81. Keep items grouped together in the pantry, such as packs of fruit, canned vegetables, starches, snacks, and breakfast foods.

82. After grocery shopping, remove as much plastic wrap, boxes, and packaging as you can before storing items away.

83. Use a magazine rack or bin to hold magazines, pamphlets, and newspapers that you are still reading.

84. Park far enough out in store lots to avoid close-up traffic jams and door dents.



85. If you want to help and volunteer but are limited on time, offer to buy supplies or contribute a small monetary donation.

86. When you loan something out to a friend or family member, make sure your name and phone number are on it. For more expensive things, you can also take pictures of the person with it as a reminder of who is borrowing your belongings.

87. For gifts that your kids receive after thank you notes are sent out or after a celebration, make a point to call the gift giver personally right then and there so you don't forget to show appreciation.

88. Order and use pre-made address labels or address stamp.

89. Maintain a small container for sewing supplies like buttons, needles, thread, and fasteners.

90. Keep a stash of blank greeting cards that you can use for get well, thank you, or congratulatory occasions.

91. Incorporate artificial flower arrangements and plants into your décor if real flowers get too messy or you forget to water them.

92. In order to remember to do something or call someone, set your phone reminder alarm to alert you at a specified time. You can also email yourself a reminder with more detailed information or create a pending to-do list.

93. Clean up stains, spills, or dirt piles as they happen or when you notice them.

94. Prepare fruit and vegetable snacks when you bring them home from the grocery. Wash them, cut up if necessary, and place in ready-to-grab containers.

95. If you are looking to change out holiday decorations, ask your friends and family if they would like to have an exchange or swap meet before you buy new ones.

96. Carry a backpack to events like festivals, amusement parks, and hikes. You will have enough room for small drinks, snacks, and souvenirs and still be able to keep your hands free.



97. Prior to a doctor's appointment, prepare a list of questions to ask healthcare personnel. Include any requests for medication refills or procedure orders.

98. Label items like kids' coats and books, photo albums, and frozen food containers.

99. Keep a few pre-cooked or ready to eat foods in your pantry and refrigerator.

100. Organize your child's room by using cubby shelves, bins, cork boards, toy nets, and desks with drawers.

101. Make a household to-do list for repairs or to-buy list for more expensive items like wall décor or furniture pieces. Cross off as they are finished or purchased.

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