

• **Being More Organized**

Use a planner A planner is especially useful if you have a lot of appointments and your days are so varied that you have trouble keeping track of your schedule. For example, if you travel a lot or attend classes at various times of day, it's much easier to carry a planner with you to consult frequently--you can't do that with a calendar. You can also usually fit more information in a planner.

- **Write it down!** A short pencil is better than a long memory. Anything and everything you need to remember should be written down. Even if your memory is great, nobody's perfect and it doesn't hurt to put it on paper, just in case. Record phone numbers, appointments, birthdays, shopping lists, and things to do, and record them where you can easily find and refer to them when you need them.

- **Make to do lists**

- Make a to do list for your day. Your daily or immediate list should never be more than 5 items long, or else you're taking on too much and setting yourself up for failure. Mark one or two of those items as things you absolutely must get done that day, and pursue those tasks relentlessly until you get them done.
- Make a to do list for the week. Appropriate items here would be: Grocery shopping fix air conditioner, etc. Draw from this list to make your daily to-do list. A white board or board with erasable markers can help to remember all one has to do every day, or long term goals.
- Make a to do list for the month. This list would have more general tasks like: Birthday gift to Jill, get car serviced, dentist appointment. Draw from this list to make your daily and weekly to-do list.
- Make a to do list for your life. Drastic, yes, but why not use this time to rethink your life and where it's going? Getting organized is all about priorities, and it never hurts to get your ducks in a row.

- **Follow through.** There's no point in making a to-do list if you don't discipline yourself to complete the tasks you've assigned yourself. There are many ways to stick to your to-do list. Stop procrastinating, remove or ignore distractions, and hop to it.

- If something keeps slipping to the bottom of your to-do list, take a good look at it. Is it really important? If so, get it over with, or at least get it started. If not, put it back in the long-term list for "someday" or get it off the list altogether. Don't let yourself get hung up on something for too long.

Multitask. Organize a drawer while talking on the phone. Fold towels while watching television. Listen to books on tape while driving, etc. Do take care to combine only compatible tasks, though, or you'll just waste time compared to doing things in sequence.

Make Decisions To be more organized, make more decisions. Clutter and disorganization is often the result of failing to decide what to do about, or with, something. Start flexing your decision muscles with little things, and you'll soon find yourself more confident about taking action on the stuff around your home, on your desk and in your office. Try it today!

TIPS

- It's a good idea to carry a notepad and pen with you at all times so you can write things down as they come to you (usually at the most inconvenient times, which is why they're so promptly forgotten). If you're worried about fitting a notepad in your pants pocket, don't be. Check bookstores and office supply centers to find a notepad slim enough for any pocket. Of course, if your planner is compact enough, it can serve this purpose as well. Another idea would be to have a PDA, Blackberry or palm Pilot. Some cell phones have notification or note-taking menus. If you are using one of those, they may be practical too. As a last resort, call your own phone number and leave yourself a voice mail.
- When running errands, map out the best path so you get the most done and keep chit chat to a minimum. Don't get sidetracked. Target what you need to do. If something else comes to your mind, write it in your notebook to do at a later date.
- Post-it notes are your friend. Put them in nifty spots as reminders. For example, if you know you need to wash your cars, then put a post-it note on your steering wheel so that next time you get in your car, you remember to get it done. Other good spots for post-it notes are doorknobs, mirrors, and PC monitors (the borders, not the actual screen).
- Start your phone conversations with "I only have ____ minutes to talk." Then stick with it. When calling for appointments, make sure you have all information you will need and write down any questions in advance.

- If you know that you're not naturally inclined to be organized, you can change that by starting with one small area of your living space and focusing on keeping that small area organized. Keeping a small area organized over time is easier to do, and it will help you build a new habit. After about 2-3 months of keeping one corner organized, you will naturally tend to expand your new-found organizing instincts to other areas.
- "A place for everything and everything in its place" is always a good organizational rule of thumb to live by.
- Remember: "Organized minds make successful people."
- Make sure you always have what you need for the day with you.
- When making your to do list for the week, remember things may occur that could be entirely unexpected. So, do not set in stone what you need to do entirely.
- Treat yourself right - get plenty of sleep the night before and eat healthy (or healthier). To accomplish anything you need to be able to think clearly and need energy to do it.
- Regardless of what you are organizing, choose the system that makes most sense to you.
- Keep your surfaces clear. Reducing visual clutter helps reduce mental clutter, over stimulation, and the feeling of overwhelm. Get rid of stuff you don't need - so that you can put things you do need away and out of everyday sight. You'll feel instantly calmer.