



## ***Get organized by starting small***

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If you are overwhelmed by clutter in your home, office, or schedule, start small to show immediate results.  
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If you've decided to get organized, you probably have something specific in mind, like a schedule that's out of control, a particular space in your home that bursting at the seams, or a workspace in which you no longer can find anything when you need it. Congratulate yourself for acknowledging your need and making a commitment to do something about it!

Getting organized requires [forming new habits](#). Like any new habit, it takes some time to integrate getting organized into your routine, and it's easy to slip back into the old behaviors that caused your clutter or disorganization in the first place. For some, just looking around at the clutter and disarray is enough intimidation never to get organized. Finding a place to start paralyzes others. If the size of the mess or the starting point is what's stopping you, try getting organized by starting small.

The disorganization or clutter in your schedule or home or office or car or locker or \_\_\_\_\_ (you fill in the blank) probably formed gradually. So, unless you have a milestone or deadline looming, plan to take some time to get organized. You're already a busy person, so [scheduling a small amount of time](#) to get started will be easier than setting aside many hours or days. Here's how to make some progress right away:

1. **Make an appointment with yourself.** Find 30 minutes to one hour in your schedule, and block the time for yourself. Keep the appointment at the location you want to get organized: home, office, car, garage, storage space, etc. Take some notes to better remember your priorities and decisions.
2. **Name your biggest challenge.** Ask yourself, "What's the issue that caused me to want to take steps to get organized?" Whether it's a cluttered space or unmanageable schedule, note what it is, and focus on only that issue. If your challenge is a particular space, you may want to take pictures to help you remember the original mess while you make progress.
3. **Describe your desired outcome.** Ask yourself, "What do I want the results of my efforts to look like?" It could be that you want to find more time to spend with your family. Or, it could be that you want to have enough room in your dining room to entertain guests. Or, maybe you'd like to be able to park your car in the garage again! Whatever your desired outcome, write it down so you can remind yourself what you're working toward.
4. **Break your project into pieces.** Few of us have the luxury to stop everything and take on a large task, so you'll be finding minutes or hours in your schedule to accomplish small tasks that help you reach your goal. While you're in the space you'd like to organize, look around, and make a list of the parts or "chunks" of the project you can probably handle in short periods of time - a corner, a drawer, or a shelf.
5. **Give yourself a deadline.** Ask yourself, "When would I like this project to be finished?" There may be an event that motivates you, like guests arriving from out of town. Maybe it's an upcoming milestone like retirement or graduation or an addition to the family. Whatever has prompted you to get organized, be kind to yourself as you give yourself a date to be finished. Make it a specific date, like "by my birthday," not something generic like "sometime this spring."
6. **Schedule backward from your deadline.** Start from your deadline date and work backward to set aside time in your schedule to tackle each item in your list of chunks. Whether it's an hour, several hours, or a day or two, schedule the time, and commit to keeping these appointments with yourself.

That's the plan. Now, keep that first appointment to get organized, and the job will be done before you know it. For tips to organize specific spaces or your time, choose a [Get Organized](#) article and get started. Share here how you tackled an organizing task by keeping it small. Click on "subscribe" to be notified of future Get Organized articles.

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