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30 Ways to Find Time to Get Organized

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Why do you want to get organized?

To Reduce Stress

Life is just a little easier when you know where things are and you are getting important things done on time.

To Save Money

Find coupons when you need them, use gift certificates before they expire, quit paying late fees, and stop buying things you already have.



Do you often ask yourself,

How can I find time to get organized?

It's very challenging to work full-time, come home, cook dinner, interact with your family, go to sleep, and get up the next day and do it all over again... and somehow find time to organize your life! Finding the time to make needed changes is elusive for those who need it the most.

Here are our 30 best ways to save time and carve out a space in your schedule to do your planning and projects.

Time Management

1 Delegate. Focus on what you do best and delegate the rest. You may realize that your spouse, your children, and others around you are more capable than you thought. Make sure you (1) clearly communicate what needs to be done, (2) empower the person to get it done, and (3) follow up with them to make sure it was done.

2 Configure appointments to avoid traffic. If you have a choice between getting a haircut at 8:30 or at 9:30, it's wiser to choose 9:30 so you will avoid much of the morning logjam. Is there a way you could have a more flexible schedule at work? Is there a way you could work from home in the mornings and come in later after traffic slows down? Think about avoiding rush hour as much as possible to save tremendous amounts of time in your car and lots of money on gas. (Reduce your "carbon footprint" too!)

3 Consolidate errands. Make a list of errands in your time management system, all grouped together for better visibility. If you need to go out, look at your errands list to see what else can be done. Clutter Diet members know we recommend having a "Destination Station" with a shelf for errand items, so they stay near the door ready to go out with you.

Why do you want to get organized?

To Save Time

Finding things easily means you don't waste time looking for things, and remembering what to bring with you means fewer trips back to get what you forgot.

4 Use a timer. One of the best time management tools is a simple kitchen timer. You can do anything for short spans of time, like 10 minutes, 15 minutes, or even one hour, depending on the task. Break procrastination by promising yourself you only have to do that much and then you can take a break to check e-mail or do something else you think is fun. You may find that you want to continue beyond the bell. Another timer method is trying to “beat the clock” with something you want to get through quickly, like doing the dishes. You can also use a timer to limit lengthy phone conversations, another big time stealer! ([We have a great timer here in our online store.](#))

5 Trade time with a friend. Teaming up with others can save you both a lot of time. Ask a nearby friend to be an “errand buddy.” When one of you goes to the grocery store or discount store, call and ask if the other person needs anything. Friends can also help each other with organizing projects and other big undertakings, and it makes the whole thing much more fun!

6 Think like a lazy person! Ask yourself, “How can I do this faster, better, or not at all?” Purposefully looking for efficiencies can yield huge time savings. Asking yourself, “How can I avoid cooking dinner?” means you might get more creative with some leftovers. Asking yourself, “How can I get to this meeting faster?” means you might find an alternate driving route that saves you ten minutes. Train your brain to think this way and you will be surprised what you can do in less time!

7 Say NO more often. Other people's priorities should not automatically be yours. When you are clear on your priorities, it's easier to say no to things that don't matter.



“We need to find the courage to say NO to the things and people that are not serving us if we want to rediscover ourselves and live our lives with authenticity.”

- Barbara DeAngelis

Why do you want to get organized?

To Avoid Embarrassment

An organized home is more easily opened to friends and family for entertaining and is not embarrassing when people just drop by. Organizing yourself to arrive on time to appointments avoids excuses and frustrating situations.

So how do you keep track of your passwords?

You can use a simple A-Z index card file to make a card for each account. You can also get an unused address book with tabbed sections for the alphabet and write them in there, or get the [Internet Password Organizer®](#) book, designed just for this. We also like electronic password keepers such as Splash ID (www.splashid.com) and Password Agent (www.moonsoftware.com). Whatever you do, make sure it's secure (don't leave the house with it!) and make sure that someone important to you knows where to find this information in an emergency.

Purchasing & Administration

- 8 Shop online whenever possible.** If it takes you 15 minutes to drive to the mall, 10 minutes to park and go in, 30 minutes to walk around and shop, and another 15 minutes to drive home, that is over an hour of your time. You also have the cost of gas to consider. You could do the same transaction in only 15 minutes or less on your computer. Yes, you may have to pay for shipping, but you don't have to pay for gas anymore, and you've gained almost an hour of your time back.
- 9 Pay your bills online, and have bills automatically paid whenever possible.** It takes a lot of time to handle paper bills, write out a paper check, and mail them in an envelope with a stamp. Most banks now have online bill paying capability, and it takes a fraction of the time to handle your payments. You can set up automatic recurring payments for things like your car loan, mortgage, or even the orthodontist.
- 10 Consolidate and simplify credit card accounts.** If you have multiple credit cards, try to narrow them down to just two—one for normal use and one for emergencies. If you have multiple credit cards you are adding tremendously to the time it takes you to pay bills and reconcile accounts. Department store cards can be tempting when they offer you a good deal for opening an account, but just use them once to get “the deal” and then put them away.
- 11 Consolidate passwords in one secure location.** People waste a lot of time trying to chase down user names, passwords, account numbers, and other personal information they have forgotten. It's not secure to use the same password for everything, and you really should change passwords periodically as well. See sidebar for suggestions on how to track your passwords.

A magnetic notepad on the refrigerator is all you need, and we do like this one that gives you a head start with a list of commonly-used items... the ["All Out Of" shopping list](#).



Why do you want to get organized?

To Avoid Unnecessary Conflict

How many times have you gotten into an argument because you or a family member has lost something important?

12 Buy low maintenance clothing. Clothes that require special care, dry cleaning, or even ironing take a lot of time to maintain, and they can cost many times their original value in cleaning expenses. Why not buy no-iron slacks and other washable clothes? Think about this as you make clothing purchases. Some low-care fabrics may cost more, but you'll actually save money and time in the long run.

13 Use a shopping list. Everyone has experienced coming home from the grocery store and realizing you've forgotten one or two important things. Going back to the store again is very time-consuming and frustrating! Use a simple shopping list to help you reduce these trips and gain efficiency.

14 Avoid going to the post office with Click & Ship from the US Postal Service. If you are shipping Priority Mail or Express Mail, you can use Click & Ship online to print the postage you need. (www.usps.com, click "Print a Shipping Label") Also make sure you request a free pickup—your mail carrier will come up to your porch or wherever you specify to pick up your package and send it on its way. Stock up on Priority Mail boxes (for free!) and you're all set for shipping from home. No more long post office lines (especially at the holidays)!

15 Go paperless—and don't print. You can get just about anything in electronic form now, whether it's a phone bill or your medical insurance benefits statements. Why not receive items electronically and save them to your hard drive without printing? Anytime you create a paper document you are making more work for yourself to sort, file, review, shred, and purge that paper later.

Why do you want to get organized?

To Sell Your Home Faster

If you are in the real estate market, presenting an uncluttered home to potential buyers can make all the difference.

Learning to Get Up Earlier

There is actually a whole blog devoted to tips on how to get up earlier: www.howtowakeupearly.com

16 Get expert advice. If you need to get something done, instead of learning it from scratch yourself, get an expert to handle the situation. For example, if your taxes are complicated, you might spend some agonizing time going over the IRS tax codes to figure out what to do, when a CPA would instantly know how to address your issues correctly. It's worth it to pay someone who does this every day to save you all of that time and energy.

Personal Choices

17 Drastically cut your television watching time. Did you know that, according to Nielsen Media, the average American watches 4 hours and 43 minutes of television per day? (Source: [Nielsen A2/M2 Three Screen Report](#)) That is over 30 hours per week! Imagine what you could get done if you just cut down even by half... that is a lot of found time.

18 Get up earlier. You can automatically add another 30 minutes or even an hour to your day by simply getting up earlier. You still need the same amount of sleep, but are you staying up late unnecessarily? Are you just watching Letterman or the news? If you go to bed earlier you can then get up to have more productive time in your day.

19 Take vacation time to organize. Sometimes we have clients who are really overwhelmed by their clutter, and they are smart enough to realize that "Rome wasn't built in a day." They know that it's going to take some time to dig out. Instead of spending money to go on vacation and come home to even more clutter and confusion, they decide to take time off to do their organizing projects. They can go back to work feeling refreshed and invigorated, and each day from then on is easier.

Family Activities

Starting a Babysitting Co-Op

<https://www.babysitterexchange.com/servelet/Main.jsp>

20 Swap child care with a friend. When my children were younger, we belonged to a babysitting co-op in our neighborhood. The co-op was a formalized way of sharing child care favors with friends, and it was a beautiful thing! Everyone wins—the kids get to play with friends, the sitter earns credit for time for herself later, and you get free time! We had a coupon system to keep things fair—to get more sitting time you simply had to earn more coupons by sitting for someone else. Even if you don't formalize your trades, swapping child care with friends is a great way to give everyone a break and save some money. (see sidebar for a resource for starting your own co-op)

21 Have a “While-U-Wait” bag. When you are waiting at sports practices and the like, make sure you have a “While-U-Wait” bag to keep you productive. You can get a lot done in those brief amounts of time. Pack your bag once a week with projects you can do anywhere, and keep some regular tools in a pouch that are commonly needed (see box). Here are some ideas for projects:

Tools to Keep in Your “While-U-Wait” Bag:

- Pens & pencils
- Highlighters
- Scissors
- Sticky notes & flags
- Stationery/cards
- Notepaper
- Postage stamps
- Return address labels
- Batteries
- Craft items
- Small travel games
- Read a great novel or a magazine
- Read work-related materials such as newsletters
- Write thank-you notes
- Write birthday cards for the month
- Catalog shop for gifts
- Update your calendar or checkbook
- Work on craft projects (needlework, etc.)
- Do crossword puzzles
- Plan menus
- Plan an event or party
- Write in a journal
- Fill out forms
- Listen to audiobooks or music
- Write a shopping list
- Write an introduction, speech, or toast
- Organize your purse, wallet, or briefcase
- Organize coupons
- Pay bills

22 Reduce kids' activities. Much has been written about the overscheduled child. Consider what life would be like if there were just ONE major afterschool activity per child in your family instead of two or three. One practice, one game, one victory party. What could you do to slow down your chauffeur duties and have a little more time in the evenings?



23 Carpool with someone. If you do have lots of afterschool activities, see if you can coordinate a driving schedule with another parent who has activities in common with your family. Imagine cutting your driving time in half! Gymnastics lessons, ballet lessons, piano lessons, sports practices, and many other activities easily lend themselves to carpool arrangements.

Household Management

24 Do your "Sunday Planning." Author Brian Tracy says for every minute you spend planning, you save TEN. Think about that! We highly recommend Sundays as a time when families can convene about the week ahead. You don't have to call a formal family meeting unless you want to, but definitely go over these items once a week:

Why do you want to get organized?

To Be Prepared

When your spouse cuts a finger in the kitchen, do you have a bandage and first aid items ready at a moment's notice? Being organized means that you're ready for what life throws your way.

"Sunday Planning" Checklist

CALENDAR:

- Review the calendar for everyone

CARPOOL:

- Who is taking whom where, and when?

COOKING:

- What's for dinner each evening?

CHORES:

- Who is cooking, cleaning, and doing dishes?

CHILDREN:

- Is there a sitter required later in the week?
- Who is in charge of homework help?
- Who is doing bath and bedtime duty for younger children?

25 Build a month's worth of dinners at a time.



There are many franchises out there promoting the concept of assembling dinners in advance. We like Dream Dinners (www.dreamdinners.com), and there are others that may be coming to your neighborhood as well. You pay them to provide containers, recipes, instructions, and prepared food ingredients, and you assemble the meals into the containers. Then you bring home the meals, put them in your freezer, and you're all set! For example, with enchiladas, you would fill the tortillas with cheese and other filling and put them into a foil pan with some sauce. It's a real time-saver, and a money-saver too, when you consider that you'll be eating out less and planning better.

26 Use rotation menus.

Another great menu-planning tool is the rotation menu, where you plan 4 weeks of meals in advance and just continue to use the same plan over and over again. You already will know what to buy every week since you will be repeating the same shopping list.

Our rotation menu form is available as a free download (in Microsoft Word format)

<http://www.clutterdiet.com/freetips>
(Register, login and find our Printables page)

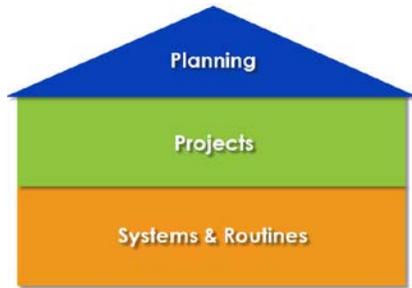
You can easily add a couple of hours to your week by hiring a high school or college student to run errands for you. Read an article I wrote called "How to Clone Yourself" on [Lifehack.org](http://www.lifehack.org) for details on how to make this work.

<http://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifehack/how-to-clone-yourself.html>

27 Outsource whatever you can.

A 2003 Wall Street Journal article once compared the cost of various services to the cost of a person's time. They found that many tasks really should be outsourced and don't even make sense to do yourself. For example, the supplies to change your car's oil cost only \$6 less than paying for an oil change service to do it for you. Ask yourself if your time is worth more than the cost of:

- Cleaning your house?
- Running simple errands?
- Washing your car?
- Bathing your dog?
- Mowing your lawn?



28 **Have a Morning Routine.** Clutter Diet members know that Systems & Routines are the very foundation of home organization. Having a morning routine sets the stage for your entire day. What do you need to get done before you leave the house for work? Consider all of these things and make a checklist for yourself and your family to follow. Are there pets to feed? What is for breakfast? What will be for dinner that night? What do you need to take with you to work or school?

Our Household Systems Workbook is a great tool to develop your own Morning Routine (available as a free bonus with our Clutter Diet memberships).

29 **Have an Evening Routine.** The same benefits apply to having an Evening Routine for your family. Who is going to do the dishes, start the dishwasher, turn out the lights, lock the doors, and make lunches for tomorrow? Morning and Evening Routines work together to ensure the beginning and ending of your days run more smoothly.

30 **Embrace “Good Enough.”** Being organized does not mean your house has to look like Real Simple magazine and that you have to become Martha Stewart. It’s not about being perfect, and just because something looks neat does not necessarily mean it’s a good system! Just as in business endeavors, when setting up any organizing system you want to ask yourself about the Return On Investment (ROI). Is the time, money, or energy you are investing in this process going to pay off by offering you more time, money, and energy in return? If the answer is no, you need to think very hard about whether you should bother. We like to work on the “Good Enough” principle, meaning that the level of organization is appropriate to provide a return that is worth the investment.

Is there a perfectionistic process you could cut out today that would leave you with a system that is “Good Enough,” and actually gain some time back in the process?

We provide a weekly “diet” plan, like a menu, that gives you suggested projects for getting your entire home organized over time, in only 2 hours per week! We have the “Main Dish,” which is one hour of focus in a certain area; we have 2 “Side Dish” projects that are 15 minutes each; there is a “Sensible Snack” that is a 5 minute tip or task; and finally, a “Dessert,” which is your reward for getting your projects done.



Organize Online with the Pros!

If you’ve benefitted from these 30 strategies, you’ll be glad to know there is way more where that came from...

Have you seen Professional Organizers on television and wished that you could hire one to help you in your home? In person, we charge rates similar to an interior designer or personal trainer, and that is just not realistic for everyone. **I am so proud to have created a program that allows anyone to get organized with affordable help from a team of professional organizers.** There is nothing like it online!

Get access to our team of pros! We answer our members’ unlimited questions directly in our private message boards every day. You can even upload photos to show us where you need our help. Where else can you get help from a team of real Professional Organizers for \$27/month? We also offer an annual membership discount option, which makes a *whole year* of unlimited access to some of the best organizers in the industry cost less than 2-3 hours of one average organizer’s time in person.

We offer a “Lite” version of our memberships with our FREE 7-Day Quickstart program! It’s a week of focused guidance from me, with a daily message, video, and instructions, to help you choose a project, get started, and get it DONE! Try Clutter Diet® today at www.clutterdiet.com/quickstart.

Let us know how we can help you GET ORGANIZED!

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