WW Ask America's Ultimate Experts

"Help! I'm drowning in paper!"

The number-one clutter issue in America, according to surveys? Paper! Luckily our pros have some easy tricks for tackling the piles and taking control of all that paper for good!

'action tray' and you're all set!"

Get organized for a year!

through December." Next, on 31

file folders write down each day of

the month (1 through 31) and put

them in the current month. Invita-

tion to a party two months away on

August 10? Put that in the August

file and when you get to August,

you'll put it into the file folder num-

bered 10. "Find the perfect card for

your sister, but her birthday is

months away? Buy it and place it in

her birthday month's file.'

2 Create

a system!



Prevent piles! Swap paper for pretty!

Got a spot in your house that's a paper magnet? Just try replacing the paper with something pretty, suggests organizer Kathi Lipp. "I used to put papers down on a side table, and it was always a mess. So one day I replaced the papers with a decorative pitcher. Once you see something pretty where you used to put papers, it's a signal saying 'no!' to making piles.'

Cull paper clutter in the car!

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A sure way to keep excess paper from piling up in your home? Never let it enter in the first place! "When my kids were younger, I'd have them go through their backpacks in the car, and any paper they didn't need would go into a recycle bag I kept in the car," says Lipp. "Once you bring papers into the house, you have to start making decisions about what to do with them-and that's where 90% of paper fatigue comes in!"

Take the ART-istic path!

Too many paper piles? Apply organizer Lorie Marrero's ART (Action, Reference, Trash) technique: "Take a small stack of papers and separate out those that need action, say, recent bills or forms that need to be filled out," she says. "Then separate reference papers-those that don't need immediate action

Our expert panel

Kathi Lipp is the author of 15 books, including Clutter Free, and teaches people the art of decluttering at ClutterFree Academy.com.

Photos: Lowell Georgia/CORB/agefotostock.com; Rolf Bruderer/Masterfile; MediaBakery.

Organizer Lorie Marrero—author of The Clutter Diet—is the creator of the Clutter Diet[®] online program. Learn more at Clutter Diet.com

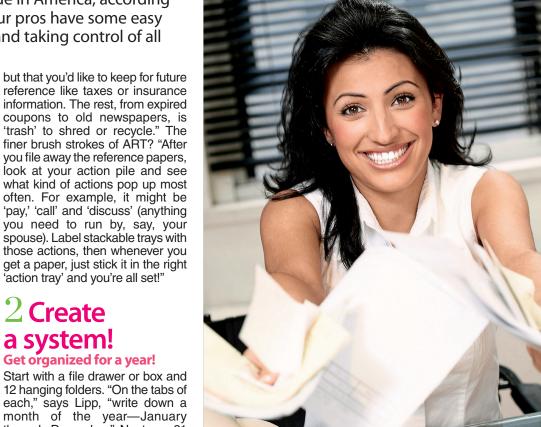


Regina Leeds, author of One Year to an Organized Life and The 8-Minute Organizer, has been a professional organizer for more than 20 years. Visit her at OrganizeWithRegina.com.



Nealey Stapleton author of 50 Simple Ways To Declutter Those Pesky Paper Piles—runs The-Organizing-Boutique. com, where readers can find more helpful tips.

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Use your phone!

Take a photo of bus or train schedules, lunch menus for school and other important information, so you have it handy. Then you can toss the paper versions—and your desk and your fridge will stay clear!

Let go of tossables!

How long should you keep important papers? "The IRS advises to keep your taxes for three years," says organizer Regina Leeds. "But always check with your state, tooin California, for example, it's four years. Every year when you file your taxes, you can shred the oldest material and file your most recent." Also have papers worth saving digitally scanned at Staples or a copy center. In most casesincluding tax returns-printing out a scanned copy of paperwork is just as good as the original.

Quickie paper organizing tips!

Create a mail station: "Just place a basket and shredder, say, in a corner of your kitchen to create a mail station, where you can go through mail quickly and get rid of it. all in one place," pro organizer Nealey Stapleton advises.

Toss for 10: Overwhelmed? Set a timer for 10 or 15 minutes and tear though a small pile, tossing or recycling obviously unnecessary items like flyers for sales long past or old catalogues, says Leeds.

-Kristina Mastrocola