

How to Get Better Organized & Save Time: A Mom-Tested Guide

By Diana O., DIYS Contributor



Suffice it to say, there is NEVER enough time in a day.

Finding time to do the things you enjoy or want to do with your family is a constant challenge.

That's why I'm sharing these time-tested organization tips, so you can get organized and reclaim that your time for yourself and your family!

Some of them may sound familiar, but hopefully you will pick up a couple of new ones to implement:

1) DO IT NOW.....OR IN OTHER WORDS, "EAT THAT FROG"

If there's a task I dread, I know I need to get it out of the way immediately or it's going to snowball. Brian Tracy, a famous author, coined the phrase, "Eat that frog," for this process of doing the least desirable thing first.

Laundry is a prime example. If I don't fold and put away the clothing as soon as a load is done, it will inevitably sit in a basket for weeks and just multiply like rabbits. Suddenly, a 15 minute job became a three hour chore. Talk about a time suck!

2) MEAL PLAN LIKE A BOSS

Full Disclaimer: This one is a little extreme. My husband wavers between thinking I am a genius, a control freak, or just plain batty!

Here it goes.....I plan ALL of our meals for two weeks out – including snacks. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are all accounted for. Crazy, right?

It's so worth it though. We don't always adhere to the schedule strictly but it takes away the 3pm freak out when you realized you haven't pulled anything out for dinner and baseball practice is at 5pm!

Meal planning also allows you to account for the busy days – Crockpot meals on Wednesdays due to a busy schedule, pre-packing lunches the night before, or overnight oatmeal in the fridge.

The added bonus is that it keeps your grocery bill in check because you're only buying what you need.

In addition to meal planning, freezer meals are my saving grace. I usually try to double recipes when cooking. It doesn't take any extra time to do and I get to freeze half to pull out for another meal.

I don't limit it to dinners either – I freeze biscuits and gravy, waffles, pancakes, French toast, pizzas, lunch meat, and more.

Whether it's a meal that didn't go right, lack of planning or unexpected guests – my freezer always has us covered.

3) ROTATE TOYS AND PLAY SMART

If you have children and they are anything like mine, they can destroy a room faster than you can clean it up. Everyone hates cleaning up messes they did not create.

We've learned to play smart by setting up a monthly toy rotation. We doubled the width of the top shelf in the boy's closet and we pull a select amount of toys down every month for them to play with. If they want to pull a new toy down, they need to put up a toy as well.

PRO TIP: We also have efficient clean up solutions in place. You know those mats you can buy for playing with Lego's, Hot Wheels or even Barbie's? We've found a king size sheet works equally well. When they are done playing you just gather the corners and dump everything back into its storage container!

4) DIVIDE AND CONQUER

The greatest organization and time saver is utilizing the people that live in your home!

Your kids, your partner, or your roommates are more than capable of pitching in – regardless of age or the amount they work outside the home.

Our house is set up so that the kids have bottom drawers where their cups and plates are kept. At ages 3 and 5 they are responsible for unloading the dishwasher and putting their dishes away. They also put silverware away.

Likewise, they help with putting away laundry and even light yard work. They are responsible for feeding the animals (and we have a small zoo!) and cleaning up after themselves.

My husband and I divide all of the other chores. We all contribute to the mess so we all contribute to the clean up as well!

5) KEEP A COMMAND CENTER

Ever since my college days I have kept a command center in my home. It's usually close to the front door and it's a place to stash keys, mail, purses, and other important things.

It greatly reduces the scramble to figure out where I put my keys this time or if I remembered to pay a bill. I like to keep a calendar up there along with a dry erase board so I can track things visually or leave myself reminders as well.

6) KILL THE CLUTTER

This is an area everyone struggles with! Anything that doesn't serve a purpose really shouldn't have a place in your home. If you can, keep it from even entering the home in the first place.

That means keeping a bin by the front door to pitch junk mail in, turning down well intended cast offs from family members, and being mindful of any purchases I do make.

Haven't worn that sweater in two years? How about that inherited old set of china that you never use?

Be honest and ruthless with yourself and ask these 3 questions as you evaluate each item:

1. Do you love it?
2. Do you ever use it?
3. Would you buy it again?

As you go make your way through the minefield of clutter, these 3 questions should be top of mind at all times.

Here are a couple more ideas to help with the process:

1. Hang hangers backward in your closet. Every time to wear something and replace it, turn the hanger around. After a year, donate anything still hanging on a backward hanger. It frees up space and reduces laundry – a win win!
2. Add shelves on the sides and store out-of-season clothing on them. Or invest in drawers to slide under the bed to store clothing, bedding or the family cat in my case!

7) FIVE MINUTE CLEANUPS

Life happens and sometimes company is coming....when you haven't had a chance to do anything at home! This is where the five minute clean up comes in handy.

Break out the vacuum and the steam mop to tackle the floors. Grab newspaper and Windex to wipe down mirrors and glass. Grab a laundry basket and toss everything that's out of place in it.

Stash it in the bedroom and lock the door. As long as things appear surface-clean, most people won't know what actually lurks beneath.

PRO TIP: Simmer some cinnamon, vanilla and other spices in a pot of water on the stovetop. Your house will smell like fresh baked cookies and guests won't notice a thing out of place.

I'm not saying that my house and my life are never a disorganized mess. It happens more often than I would like....

But what's great though is even when we get off track, it's easy to get back in shipshape quickly because the tips are simple and easy to implement. It's not about changing your lifestyle or even eliminating anything from it, it's just taking some simple steps to streamline things.

Before you know it, you'll actually have some spare time to tackle a postponed DIY project or read a few chapters from that book you picked up months ago...if you can just remember where you put it. :)