



S.P.A.C.E.

The Five-Step System For Organizing The 'Stuff' In Your Life

Do you have too much clutter? Use this simple, five-step process for organizing stuff in your home or office. It's easy to remember just think of the word SPACE.

1. **S**ort by category
2. **P**urge or part with
3. **A**ssign a home (room or area of your home or office)
4. **C**ontain the clutter-creep
5. **E**qualize to maintain

What you'll need:

- Three medium to large bags or boxes marked as "*Trash*," "*Recycle*," and "*Donate*,"
- One small box labeled "*Lives Elsewhere*" to transport small items to other parts of your home.
- Dust cloth or cleaning tool
- CD player or radio for music (optional)
- Friend or clutter-buddy (optional)

How to prepare:

1. Select one section of any room in your home. I recommend a space no larger than 5 feet wide by 3 feet deep. A desk, or a dresser or a bed is a good place to start.
2. Set a time frame. For example, two hours maximum.
3. If possible, have others or a phone machine answer your phone to help you stay focused.
4. Take the time to dust off the area as needed but don't get hung up on heavy cleaning, polishing or repairing.

What you'll do:

Sort

- Empty the contents of the area (or furnishing) onto the floor, a bed or table.
- Create separate piles by *type* (that is NOT by how or when you used them). Example: Documents with documents, office supplies with office supplies, books with books, home décor with home decor. Don't get hung up on how you used them. Resist the urge to throw things away at this stage wait till you...

Purge (or Part with)

- Go through each pile you've created one at a time and place items you no longer need or want in one of the containers (Donate, Recycle, Trash, or Lives Elsewhere)



TIP: Don't know whether to keep it or not? Ask yourself these four questions. If you answer NO to either of them, consider letting the item go to find new life somewhere else by donating, selling, recycling or disposing of it responsibly:

1. "Do I love this item?"
2. "Do I use this item? (Or have I used it in the past 12 months?) or will I probably use it?"
3. "Does it resonate with positive meaning for me?"
4. "If this item were suddenly gone, would I want to replace it or find it again through other means?"

Assign a home

Look at the categories of items you have left and assign a home for them. This would be a room in your home or a designated area in your office. If you are not sure where items should "live," try asking yourself "How and where do I use this item most?" For example:

- "Do these clothes need to be folded or hung?" = Dresser vs. closet
- "Are these cosmetics for home or travel?" = Bathroom vs. travel bag
- "Am I reading these books now or are they part of my library?" = Bedroom vs. living room
- "Do I want to look at these photos when I wake up, or when I work?" Home vs. office
- "Do I use these envelopes every day or occasionally?" Desk drawer vs. storage cabinet

TIP: If you find something that lives somewhere else in your home, don't waste time finding that place now. Instead, place them in the "Transport" container and move them *after* you've assigned a home for everything else.

Contain

Containers include everything from our homes, which contain us, and all our stuff, down to the tiniest pillbox and everything in between. Don't stock up on containers until you know what you are keeping.

- Use containers to separate like items. Small gift boxes or plastic containers without lids make great drawer dividers.
- Use what's around your home before investing in new containers. Try to keep at most no more than two types of item per individual compartment or container.

Equalize (to maintain it all)

Once you finish your organizing task, sit back and enjoy but remember organizing is a practice, not a one-time event. Periodically go back and check to see if your system is still working. If clutter starts to build again, it's time to start the process again. The better you've sorted and contained, the less time you will need to spend on maintaining later.

Adapted from Organizing from the Inside Out by Julie Morgenstern