



Organize for Spring: Top tips from Eastside Pros

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With spring cleaning right around the corner, it is time to start thinking about getting organized. The task of organizing a home or office may seem overwhelming, tiresome and boring, but with the help of these quick and easy tips from professional organizers Laurie Lamourex, founder of [Seamless Moves](#); Tracy Zettner, partner and director of marketing for [Seamless Moves](#); and Laura Leist, president of [National Association of Professional Organizers \(NAPO\)](#) and owner of [Eliminate Chaos LLC](#), organizing chaos and clutter can be a rejuvenating experience. Leist stressed how essential it is to plan time to organize. "It is important to understand that organizing is a process, not an event," said Leist. "You need to schedule a time in your calendar to commit to organizing just as you any other commitment on your calendar."

1. Take inventory.

Inventory the space that you have available and look at it with an eye towards efficiency. "But if you are not in the mood to organize on that day – don't. Wait until you want to do it; you will be more efficient and do a better job if you do so," said Lamourex.

2. Break it down.

Make a list of projects and break them down into manageable bite-size pieces. "Say to yourself: 'today I am going through my closet and taking out and donating all of the old clothes that I don't wear anymore,'" said Leist. "Look at what your priorities are. What room is driving you the craziest? Start there."

3. Pace yourself.

If you have limited time, do an item a day. "Open a cupboard a day and organize it instead of trying to tackle the entire kitchen," said Leist. With projects such as the kitchen, Zettner recommends using the McCormick "How old are your spices?" spice checker at www.mccormick.com/Spices101/HowOldSpices.aspx to see if it is time to throw away some of your old spices.

4. Archive and dispose.

Go through your old stuff and either get rid of or archive it. Old pictures can be archived by scanning them and putting them on an external hard-drive or flash drive. Convert VHS to DVD and records to .mp3's (You can buy converters at online for less than \$80).

5. Clear out unneeded items.

"If you have things lying around that you plan to fix eventually, apply the 'earthquake test'," said Lamourex. "If it had been broken in an earthquake, would you replace it? If not, throw it out." Another way to get rid of unneeded items is to participate in local recycling events. Events in the area can be found at <http://your.kingcounty.gov/solidwaste/garbage-recycling/events.asp>. Lamourex said that old TV's and computers are now free to recycle and old cell phones can be donated for the use of soldiers overseas, battered women's shelters, and senior citizens homes. Old glasses can be donated for the use of those who need them in developing countries. For a full list of items that can be donated, donors can contact their local charitable organizations.

6. Get creative.

"Think, how many ways can I use this object," said Lamourex "Think about a shoe holder that goes over the door. What else can you put in there besides shoes? You can put Barbie dolls in it, and crafting things like scissors and thread. You can do all kinds of things if you just be creative with storage pieces." Often times, people already have great items to use for organizing just lying around. "Look in your own home and see what you already have and what can be used for organizing," said Leist.

7. Create a "daily action center."

" This can be at your home office desk or another place that papers accumulate. "This can be a file drawer next to your desk for things that you need often or things that require a next action step such as bills, take-out menus, kid's school stuff, theatre tickets, etc," said Leist. "This stuff will be at your fingertips and accessible but still put away and organized so they are easy to find."

8. Personalize your organizing style.

"You know what you like and what you style is. You know whether you like clear containers or hidden spaces," said Zettner. Organizing style also has a lot to do with your preference and personalty. "Personalizing is all about your own personal preference," said Leist. "Visual people need to see their things, so clear boxes work great for them. For many families, labels work best so everyone knows where things go. For others, putting things in boxes to be hidden is the best method. Leist also recommended methods such as adding pictures on labels for kids who are not able to read yet.

9. Buy things that are multi use.

Get furniture with built in storage such as side tables and ottomans that open up and beds with drawers underneath. "Especially in this area for those living in condos, you want to get furniture that has multiple uses," said Lamourex.

10. Reward yourself.

"Sometimes the biggest reward is being finished and being able to find things," said Zettner.

TIPS TO STAY ORGANIZED:

- 1. Opt out of the things that you don't want.** "You can call or go online to opt out of phone books, junk mail, flyers, etc," said Lamourex . "This ensure that there is less junk coming in."
- 2. If you bring something new in, something old must always come out.** "If you buy a new pair of shoes, an old pair must leave," said Zettner.
- 3. Once you are organized, make the decision to stay that way.** "Being organized is a lifestyle change for the whole family and everyone must actively participate in staying organized," said Leist.