

Decorating Spaces

HOME DESIGN MADE EASY

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Easy As 1, 2, 3!

HOW TO DE-CLUTTER YOUR HOME OFFICE IN NO TIME BY
JULIETTE GUILBERT



As more and more American homes — nearly 70 percent, by one recent count — incorporate home offices, more and more Americans are being buried up to their necks in office supplies, unfiled paperwork and undisentangleable snarls of computer cords. In fact, as I write this, I am sitting in just such a space, surrounded by stacks of

magazines, piles of interview notes, software manuals with the shrink-wrap intact, unpaid bills and three-year-old family photos waiting to be scrapbooked. If you're in a similar situation (and you know you are), never fear. There is now an entire industry devoted to organizing your office — along with lots and lots of cool new desks, file sorters, shelving systems and paper trays to sort all those hideous piles into.

STEP ONE **When in doubt, TOSS IT OUT!**

"The first thing you want to address is what do I need versus what can I get rid of," says professional organizer Monica Ricci of Catalyst Organizing Solutions in Atlanta. "Because there is no point in spending time or money organizing things you don't even need." Once you've sorted keepers from tossers, she says, it's time to think about how you use the items in your office: the more

Gadgets, Gadgets, Gadgets! Beyond the three-hole punch.

According to our unscientific poll of office organizers, a scanner may be your best weapon in the war against paper clutter. If you don't have a paper file for it, you can scan it, make a PDF and toss it. Whether you choose a stand-alone flatbed scanner or an all-in-one scanner, printer, fax and copier, this is one gadget you can't afford to do without. Also critical in this age of identity theft is the shredder, which protects your privacy as it devours your paper clutter. For the extra security-minded,

often you need something — whether it's a file, a gadget or a reference manual — the closer it should be to your desktop.

Organizing the desktop zone is key — this is where you spend most of your time, and also where you will probably want to find things quickly and easily. “People are fond of thinking organizers hate piles,” says Ricci. “But that’s not true.” She regards random heaps of assorted documents with horror. But she says that once paper clutter is separated into named categories like bills to pay, letterhead and catalogues, and placed in some kind of simple desktop file system — a set of stacking trays, a spinning carousel or even a system of clipboards mounted on the wall — “you’re good to go.”



Cute storage caddies keep desktop items like pens, pencils, notepads and paper clips organized and easy to reach in a pinch. Clique bins attachable organizers from [Three](#) by Three Seattle.

consider a personal fire safe, available from major office supply retailers, for storing your important documents.

Once you’ve acquired these serious gadgets, take a look at the dazzling array of fun and handy chotchkas designed to help you stay organized. A desktop label maker that connects to your computer allows you to label containers, files and notebooks clearly, quickly and attractively.

STEP TWO **Stock up on organizing systems!**

K.J. McCorry, president of Officiency Inc. of Boulder, Colo., and author of *Organize Your Workday in No Time* (Que Publishing, 2005), suggests waiting until you’ve purged unnecessary items and categorized the rest before you start shopping for organization products. For McCorry, the essential desktop tools are stackable trays, baskets for holding envelopes, pens and supplies, and desktop file ladders for active files you don’t want to hide away in a drawer, where they’re sure to be forgotten or overlooked.

Another organizer, Jennifer Humes (a.k.a. the “Clutter Queen”) of Dallas, adds a valuable note about office aesthetics. “Getting your stuff organized will help you become more efficient in your space, but if you don’t like the way it looks, why would you want to be in there?” she asks. “You need to have things around you that make you feel good.” Humes notes that traditional office accessories like clipboards, wipeoff boards and wall pockets now come in a range of colors, which can be paired with appealing paint hues for an easy and inexpensive spruce-up of a drab office space. But the most important home office accessory, she says, is greenery: simply putting a plant or some flowers on your desk has been proven to increase office productivity.



Use a double-sided noteboard to stick up important notes and photos and write messages to yourself. Rolling Easel, \$249; www.potterybarn.com

When you don’t have time to file, simple desktop paper holders — from sand-weighted “pageups” to wire memo clips — can keep important scraps of paper from being lost in the shuffle. Traditional desktop gadgets have been retooled to be both better functioning and cooler looking, from vintage-look chrome staplers and pencil sharpeners to a sleek pop-up tape dispenser that can be removed from its weighted base and strapped to your wrist with a built-in elastic band.

And if your spouse likes to sneak up behind you while you’re “working” (read: surfing the net or doing IM with your

STEP THREE **Rome wasn't built in a day!** If you're not overjoyed with the way your home office looks or functions, Humes advises, "change one thing a week until you feel it's 100 percent what you want. If you don't like your desk where it is, this week try facing it a different way. It's not something you have to do all at once." Which is good, because it is going to take me a while just to dig out from under this mountain of unsorted paper.



These mesh stackable letter trays are a fun way to accessorize and organize your home office. www.organizeeverything.com

college roommate), drop \$7 on a computer rearview mirror so you can close that browser tab in a hurry!

Know When To Hold 'em

Monica Ricci's six questions to ask yourself when deciding what to keep:

- ▶ If I keep this, how will I find it again?
- ▶ Is this available somewhere else? (i.e. the library, the Internet)
- ▶ Will this information quickly become outdated?
- ▶ Does this paper require action?
- ▶ Will I ever really get around to reading this? (Don't kid yourself!)
- ▶ Does this paper require future action? (If so, put it into a holding file and note the date of required action in your calendar.)

MAKEOVER SUCCESS STORIES



BEFORE



AFTER

(above) Before, this home office was cluttered with paper and unorganized. By simply bringing in storage racks and file boxes, everything now has a place.



BEFORE



AFTER

(right) In small home offices, consider using closed storage units to keep files and items hidden away until you really need them.

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