

Create a Filing System That Works For You

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Two of the most common causes of paper clutter are due to an ineffective filing system along with the fear of filing something away and not being able to find it again. Following are several types of filing systems you can choose from to help you eliminate piles of paper for good.

Option #1: File Alphabetically By Color-Coded Categories

If you have only few files you keep, filing by category might work best for you. Here are some tips to keep in mind when using this type of filing system:

- Keep major categories broad instead of over-categorizing with too many file folders.
- File alphabetically within each major category.
- Consider a different color for each major category. For a home filing system, your colors and categories might include hanging file folders for the following:
 - Green – for all files dealing with finances.
 - Red – for files relating to home, family, and friends.
 - Purple – for files of your hobbies and interests.
 - Blue – for files relating to your career or education.
 - Orange – for files relating to health and vitality.
 - And so forth.

Option #2: File Numerically and Keep an Index

If you need to keep track of a large number of files, using a numerical filing system might work best for you. Assign each paper you need to keep with a specific number that correlates with either a paper-based or a computer-based index. Files can be divided into three major groupings:

- Active Files – papers you use daily, weekly, or monthly.
- Reference Files – papers you reference on a yearly (or more than a year) basis.
- Archive Files – papers you need to keep but probably won't need to reference again. Keep these files in a remote location.

Option #3: File Using a Tickler Filing System

If you deal with several papers that require your attention on a regular bases, the tickler filing system might work best for you. Set up 12 hanging file folders labeled with each month of the year. Set up 31 hanging file folders labeled with the numbers 1-31. Any papers that are date-specific can be put into the appropriate files (i.e. electric bill which is due on the 15th can be placed in the folder labeled 12 so you can send the bill in time for the 15th due date).

Option #4: File Using the Three-Box Filing System

For those who hate to file, the three-box filing system might work best for you. Purchase three boxes that are the same in size, shape, and color. Label them with the following: **personal**, **financial**, and **medical**. Put all papers relating to these three categories into their appropriate box so at least they are not scattered all over the house. Clean out boxes once a year and put papers that need to be kept into an archived location.

Print & Post Monthly Organizing Checklist

Each month there will be a new checklist for you to print and post in a visible location. These checklists will include the most common tasks to accomplish each month to help keep you on track all year long. This month's checklist can be found at www.simplyinorder.com

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