

A woman with a warm smile, wearing a white sleeveless dress, is holding a small white ceramic pot with both hands. The pot contains a dense cluster of vibrant green grass. The background is softly blurred, showing a bright, airy interior space. The overall mood is clean, fresh, and minimalist.

HOW-TO GUIDE

curated living

A SIMPLIFIED LIFE THROUGH THE TAO OF ORGANIZATION

THE SIMPLIFIED LIFE

Do you feel overwhelmed or stuck in a rut? Has your bucket list been calling your name, but you can't find the directions to the sky dive air strip? Did you actually lose your bucket list somewhere in a house full of clutter?

When we're overwhelmed and chaos reigns, we're often neglecting an important building block to harmony — being organized.

As published in The Journal of Neuroscience, researchers from Princeton University Neuroscience Institute found that clutter keeps you from being able to focus, and limits your ability to process information. Chaos is distracting and competes for your attention, breeding disharmony when your sights should be on more important things.

So take control of the chaos and simplify. Make your trek to "organization nirvana" a path to a peaceful and abundant life, and put your focus on the important things in life — like jumping out of airplanes.



> **An organized life promotes well-being.**

Minimizing stressors, which include clutter and disorganization, has a positive impact on daily life as well as quality sleep. Sleep, of course, is a necessity for happiness and well-being. It's no big secret that stress can lead to health problems — simplifying can help, and it is an easy fix. Frustration-proofing your space pays in peace.

> **Organization increases efficiency.** When you know exactly where things are, you'll have

more time for the important things in life, like spending it with family and friends, as well as nurturing your passions.

> **Simplified living saves you money.**

Do you own things, or do they own you? A commitment to less clutter can keep you from making unneeded purchases. Has disorder caused you to misplace bills and pay late fees? Strive to create a safe place for your financial nuts and bolts. When your bottom line is affected, it's time for a change.

A Relaxing Respite

The first place you open your eyes sets the tone for each new day. A serene and uncluttered bedroom promotes peaceful sleep and rejuvenation.

- > Keep accessories and decor minimal and personally meaningful. If your bedroom has become a dumping ground, remove any clutter or storage that does not belong.
- > The bedroom closet should not be a hiding place for negativity. Assess what you really wear, and keep only what you love and what you feel good wearing. Say goodbye to the rest and donate to a local thrift store. You'll be doing two good deeds at once.
- > With the clutter cleared, organize the closet. First, hang the shorter items on one side (folded pants and shirts) and the longer ones on the other (dresses). This will clear up a swath of space under the short clothes, leaving the space open for things like a dresser or laundry hamper. Walk-in closets should be organized in a way Henry Ford would have approved of — assembly line-style. Begin with the clothes you first put on and end with items like coats, hats and accessories.
- > If you find yourself frustrated by tripping over your shoes, add hanging storage on the back of your closet door, shoe shelves or stow lesser-worn or seasonal footwear under the bed. Consider moving shoes out of the bedroom to a mudroom or entryway.
- > Oh, and how about a bowl for the change, keys and other things you pull from your pockets or purse at the end of the day? But don't forget to sort through it before it overflows.

The Tao of Curated Living

De-cluttering and organizing reaps rewards, but the process can be a source of stress. Try to focus on the positives, and ask, "Do these things bring me joy?" Release the anxiety over an item's cost or its future potential, and liberate yourself to create a personal, simplified space.



Home Office

Whether you work from home, or just use your office to pay bills, a pleasant work space, free from needless clutter, fosters an environment for productivity and creativity. Feeling good in your office literally pays.

- > **Central intelligence.** Those things you use the most — envelopes, checkbooks, stamps, etc. — should be kept together in a single, easy-to-reach location.
- > **Keep it clean.** Dust, cup rings, crumbs — they all accumulate. Wipe down desks, keyboards and mice regularly.
- > **Paperless or near it.** Consider investing in a document scanner. You don't want to get rid of all your documents, but shaving down your paper isn't a bad thing. You will probably want to keep your manuals and warranties nearby in case of a home emergency — a trusty file drawer is good for these and any other documents you need to save.
- > **Mind your cords.** Phone chargers and other electronic accessories should be contained in a go-to place. Pesky wires such as power strips, extension cords and adapters can form a tangled mess, but there are products to keep them well managed or even camouflaged.
- > **Limit excess.** It's tempting to stock-up on office supplies, but purchase and store only what you have space to accommodate and what you will use in a reasonable time frame.



BATHROOM

Bathrooms are often cited as the least loved room in many homes. However, even the smallest bathroom can promote rejuvenation, and capture the peaceful, minimal aspects of a spa-like retreat.

- > **Commit to keeping the space clean.** Not only does this prevent the spread of infections or illness, it promotes relaxation and a sense of self-care. Your body and mind will thank you.
- > **Decorate for harmony.** Using uniform plastic bottles for things like shampoo and body wash can bring a classic and stylish vibe to a normally mismatched environment. Choose linens and accents that make you smile.
- > **Remove all unused, unloved or expired personal products and prescriptions.** If you're one to try many products, consider giving barely used items to friends or a local shelter. Stop remembering that unpleasant illness every time you open the medicine cabinet — properly dispose of expired medicines in the garbage can or through a community "take back" program if available in your area.
- > **Maximize storage.** Narrow organizer trays and risers in the medicine cabinet can maximize space, too! Roll-out wire baskets under sinks or in linen closets can be used for any number of items, from a variety of toiletries to hair products. In small rooms, the back of doors are your friends. Install multiple towel bars on the back of the bathroom door or find an open wall for a hanging organizer.

KITCHEN

Perhaps the hardest room to curate — especially if you're an avid cook. Keeping an eye on minimizing frustration and maximizing function can help with paring down.

- > **What do you use most often?** Store those items in easy-to-reach locations. The pie pans you only use during the holidays can move to hard-to-reach shelves or the pantry. When it comes to organization, the most used items should get center stage.
- > **What do you love?** Know your go-to food creations. If you love to bake, keep flour, sugar and other staple ingredients and tools in one place.
- > **Too many things?** Grouping items by function makes it easier to locate in the throes of cooking chaos, and makes it easier to distinguish what items are worth keeping.
- > **Love recipes?** Cookbook collections can easily take over. Clip out and create a binder of your favorites. If you use online recipes, a holder for your smart phone or tablet is handy.
- > **What about waste?** Trash cans should be out of the way, but nearby. This includes recycling and compost bins. If keeping them emptied is a source of conflict, assign a rotating schedule among family members.





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