

365

Ways to Organize Everything

Emilie Barnes & Sheri Torelli



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Why Get Organized?

Where and How to Begin

“I’d get organized, but I don’t know where to begin!” This statement has stopped more people in their organizational tracks than just about anything else. We become overwhelmed before we even get started! Here are a couple of quick tips to help you get going:

- Break the big job down into small, manageable tasks. Write them down and prioritize the tasks.
- Do the worst task first! Once it is out of the way, everything else will seem much easier.
- Keep focused and eliminate distractions while working. To keep on task, set a timer for 15- to 30-minute segments of time.
- Take small breaks every hour to refresh and re-energize.
- Reward yourself when the job is completed. You deserve it!

The Way to Organization

Successful organization depends on many factors. In order to be efficient and effective as you go about organizing your life and home, keep the four P’s of organization in mind:

- **Plan**—Planning is key to establishing success. Without

a plan we have nothing to shoot for. However, be careful not to over-plan. Too much on your to-do list and you're only aiming for failure.

- **Prioritize**—Determining what needs to be done is key. But after that you must decide the order in which your tasks need to be completed. This skill might take time to perfect, but you'll soon see the value of sitting down to determine what must be done immediately and which tasks can be put off.
- **Produce**—This is all about just getting started. Sometimes this can be the wrench in the works. We plan, prioritize...and it stops there. We must get going in a forward direction.
- **Play**—Rewarding ourselves after hard work is completed is important to success. It's much easier to plan and work hard if you know the payday is coming at the end. It makes hard work worthwhile. What rewards you choose are entirely up to you. Have fun!

Now let's talk about what hinders our success—the four P's of disorganization:

- **Procrastination**—Putting off just getting started is the main reason so many women are unsuccessful in getting their homes and time organized. It can be crippling if we are not careful. Keep starting. Even if you fail and have to start over, you have at least begun. That is much of the battle.
- **Perfectionism**—There is no such thing as a perfect job. Do your best, work hard and fast, but get rid of the notion that it must be perfect. It will cripple your progress.
- **Pride**—You cannot do it alone, so don't pride yourself

on being the only one who can do it right. Get help, delegate, and watch how quickly your workload diminishes.

- **Paralysis**—If you are not careful, procrastination, perfectionism and pride will eventually cause you to become paralyzed and unable to function.

Roadblocks to Organization

For many women (and men, too!), the desire for organization gets sidetracked by roadblocks that seem to derail their efforts before they even get started. Let's work on identifying some of the roadblocks that might keep you from getting started or completing projects that would make your home and schedule more organized.

- *Roadblock #1:* You're too easily sidetracked by other important tasks. Many times we get started, but something more pressing or more important gets in the way of completing the chore or project.
- *Roadblock #2:* You didn't allow yourself enough time to complete what you started. And you find that more often than not, you are unable to estimate the correct amount of time that is needed.
- *Roadblock #3:* The chore or project that needs completion is simply not something you enjoy, no matter the reward at the end.
- *Roadblock #4:* You know how to get the job done, but lack the skills necessary to keep it in order. Soon after you've finished an organizing project, you find yourself needing to begin it again.
- *Roadblock #5:* You are very easily distracted by nonsense and your personality lends itself to becoming too spontaneous. As soon as something else looks like more fun, you drop what you are doing and move to something

new. Maybe you think you'll just stop to check e-mail for five minutes, but that five minutes can easily turn into an hour.

- *Roadblock #6:* You finally find a system or schedule that is working, but you find you are unable to stick to it until it becomes a habit.
- *Roadblock #7:* You schedule too much in your day and rarely finish your list, thus causing you stress and frustration.

The first step to getting organized and staying organized is discovering what it is that's keeping you from success. Only then can you move forward. If you have trouble even identifying what your roadblocks might be, this might be a good time to ask a good friend who can help you be objective. Once you identify the places where you need to change, the process can begin. You need only a teachable spirit and a prayerful and willing heart.

Setting and Keeping Goals

Getting organized is often a matter of sheer desire followed by commitment. Do you want to get organized enough to make it a goal? Do you want to set goals but shy away from them because of past failures to follow through? Or maybe you aren't sure which goal to set first?

With a little information you can learn how to properly set goals for your life. Proverbs 29:18 (KJV) states that if we have no vision we will perish. You are either moving ahead or falling back; there is no middle ground. We can label a goal as *a dream with a deadline*. Sometimes our goals are difficult to achieve because they aren't very measurable. We have goals such as "I want to lose weight," "I want to eat better," "I want to be a better wife," or "I want to be more spiritual." These are all good desires, but we can't measure them and they don't have any deadlines.

There are two very important parts to goal-setting. Goals must include:

- A statement of quantity (how much)
- A date for completion (deadline)

A proper statement of a goal would be “I would like to lose 15 pounds by March 15.” This way you can determine whether you have reached your goal. But remember that goals aren’t cast in concrete; they just point you in the right direction. You can always rewrite, restate, or even cancel any goal.

As you begin to set goals for yourself, write down the things you want to accomplish in the next 90 days. As you get proficient in 90 days go out to six months, then nine months, then one year. Bite off little pieces at first; don’t choke on a mouthful.

As you list goals, consider each area of your life. For example:

- Physical goals
- Marriage/family goals
- Financial goals
- Professional goals
- Mental goals
- Social goals
- Community support goals
- Spiritual goals

An example of a 90-day goal for each of these areas would be:

- I want to do 50 sit-ups by March 1.
- I want to plan the 25th wedding anniversary party for my parents by April 15.
- I want to save \$250.00 by February 28.
- I plan to enroll in an accounting class at the community college by April 2.

- I plan to memorize the state capitals by May 5.
- I plan to invite some families from church to a roller skating party on March 26.
- I will take the Red Cross fliers to my neighbors on February 14.
- I plan to read all four Gospels by April 1.

Notice that each goal states a quantity and gives a date for completion. Each goal is measurable. As you complete each goal, take a pen and draw a line through that goal. This action will make you feel good about goal-setting. You might want to write down a new goal to take its place for the next 90 days.

Emilie's Essentials

The Philosophy of Stuff

What is it about your lifestyle that causes you to be surrounded with clutter? Search yourself, your habits, your routines, your methods, and even your philosophy about stuff to see what might lead to all that clutter. I find that organized people have a calmness and serenity about them that disorganized people don't possess. Are you harried or distracted throughout much of your day? Does this unbalanced state of mind make your home and maybe even your work setting off-kilter?

Now think in terms of when or where you feel the most calm. Are there elements from that space or experience that you could incorporate into other areas? It's helpful to think about what eases your spirit. Too many possessions, activities, or worries start to crowd out even the best intentions. Strive for balance and simplicity.

Sheri's Secrets

Find Your Style

Since everyone organizes differently, there is no one perfect way.

But any project you start must be well planned. Gather all the necessary tools and set aside the time you'll need to complete the project.

Take the project one step at a time. A good place to start is to take stock of your stuff—or even just your *feelings* about your stuff. Answer these questions as you walk through your house, jotting down notes about the answers. These will help you set goals for the coming weeks. Enjoy the beginning of a new, more organized you.

- What area in your house causes you the most stress?
- Does your clutter or mess include paper?
- Can you set aside de-cluttering time without any interruptions?
- Do you have a friend or family member who can be objective about your “stuff”?
- Would they be available to help you?
- Where do you want to start? (Which room, closet, or cabinet?)

After you are able to answer these questions, you will be able to move forward. Always make any endeavor a matter of prayer and get ready to work!