

Organized...

From the car
to the bedroom

Tracy's tips, routines
and resources that will
simplify your life!

www.TracyHoth.com



Copyright © 2011 by Tracy Hoth

All rights reserved. The use of any part of this publication reproduced, transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, or stored in a retrieval system without the prior consent of the publisher is an infringement of copyright law.

Published by Tracy Hoth Books

Requests for permission to make copies of any part of this eBook contained within this product can be made to:

Tracy Hoth

816.820.8848

Tracy@TracyHoth.com





Dear Friend

Dear Friend,

I am so excited that you are reading this eBook!! Thank you! I hope that you find some tips, products or ideas that inspire you to be better organized. Being organized is NOT being perfect or having your things look perfect! Remember that! Being organized is NOT doing things how I do them either. You have to try things and see what works for YOU and YOUR family! Being organized IS knowing what you have and being able to find it when you need it!

To get the most out of this book, choose ONE or TWO ideas and try them. After you have implemented those take a minute, scan through and pick out another tip and start doing that! Today is the day to decide to take action! Move from thinking about it to acting on it! Choose to simplify your life by implementing one small change at a time.

Some of these tips are exact things we do in our home. Some are from my friends and family. Some are from my colleagues and clients. A few tips are even from strangers in the airport!! Guess what the very first tip was that I received via email from my dear friend? Here it is: "PUT YOUR FREAKIN' CRAP AWAY AFTER YOU GET IT OUT!" Ha! Isn't that the truth!!!?? Let's just admit upfront that maintenance is a common struggle!

Enjoy the tips!! I hope there are few that improve your life. Let me know your thoughts!

Warmest encouragement on your organizing journey,

Tracy

P.S. Focus on one action step at a time.

"You cannot do a project. You can only do an action related to a project."

~ David Allen, Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity



Car

Car

Have a trash can in the car (our car has door pockets designated as the trash cans.)

Gather and empty the trash EVERY time you fill up with gas. Everyone in the car helps! If no one is in the car I MUST climb through the car and gather it myself. Note to self: Go to the gas station with a full carload of people!

Once home, before you exit the car, gather all the things around you together. Take any trash you see to a trash can (have one in the garage!) and then gather all your things and bring them into your home.

Be sure to teach your kids this by turning around before any one gets out. Point out and ask them to take this, throw out that, put this away, etc. Everyone is responsible to clean their area and take in their things. (Ahhh, your car will be clean the next time you enter it!)

Keep a car organizer¹ near you if your car doesn't have one. In my organizer there are: pens/pencils, nail file, deposit slips, CD binder, coupons, hand sanitizer, post its, car charger, lip gloss, dental floss and napkins.

Use what you have!! I use an old Crystal Light mix container to contain my pens and pencils within my organizer!



Purse

Purse

You know all those little store cards you get? Go ahead and keep the few you use the most on your key ring. With the rest, hole punch them in the corner and clip them on a ring that opens and closes. Do this with your gift cards, too. Store them in your car organizer or purse.

Insert a purse organizer². They work wonders! Plus, they can easily be transferred from one purse to another.

Take the few seconds to put back your cards, license, change, etc in the right place after each transaction.

Tie the cleaning out your purse to a regular occurring event. How about while watching your favorite television show each week? Sit down with your purse and sort through everything. Make a receipt pile, a trash pile, stuff-that-belongs-elsewhere pile, etc. As soon as there is a commercial or when the show is over, put all the piles where they belong. Aim for a once-a-week clean out.

Never lose your keys again! Attach a Carabiner³ to them and each time you get out of your car clip them onto a loop on or in your purse! It takes a second, but it will save you time!





Paper

Paper (yes, the piles!)

First things first: Have an inbox⁴. ALL paper that comes in goes there until processed. Get one that has a lid but only use it when guests come over. You can store it under the box. Your home will look clean and paperless!

Think about where you drop the mail now. Put your inbox there! You know that if your mail is in there it is not processed!

Each piece of paper needs a designated home. Use an action file/command center⁵.

Definitely have a file folder for each member of the family in your command center! This is wonderful and trains your children! My child will ask, "Where is my ..." I say, "It is in your file!" Or my husband will be getting bids on... and when I find a brochure he was looking at; I drop it in his folder, and he knows where it is!

First round of processing paper: Be ruthless.

Ask yourself, "How can I get rid of this paper?"

- Write (or enter) it on your calendar along with the key information. Get rid of it!
- Enter it into your computer or use an app on your phone like List It. Here you can store information you don't want to forget like a movie you want to watch or a store you want to visit. Get rid of it!
- Put coupons that you can't let go of because you MIGHT need it (like restaurants, pizza, retail stores, etc.) in a file folder in your car organizer immediately. It's out of your house!
- Sign permission slips that come home with your children IMMEDIATELY and have them put them in their backpacks immediately. Don't forget to write it on the calendar.

Ask again just to be sure, "How can I GET RID of this paper?" "Can I find this information somewhere else?" Get in the habit of getting rid of as much as you can right away.

Don't waste time shredding your address on junk mail. People can find your address in the phone book or by doing a search on the computer.

For other papers you want to shred get an Identity Theft Guard Stamp⁶. It can sit right inside your inbox and save you lots of time. Stamp it on the private information and recycle that paper!





Now, with the papers that you can't get rid of, put them in three categories:

- Temporary
 - They belong in the action file.
 - Examples include sport's schedule, current project, bills to pay, things you need to do this month, etc.
- Yearly
 - They belong in a file drawer that is easily accessible.
 - Examples include statements, health receipts, donation receipts, etc.
- Long term
 - You can store these in a file drawer that does not have to be easily accessible.
 - Examples include yearly Christmas letter, home improvements, taxes, vacation ideas, etc.

Tips when creating files

- There is no right or wrong way. Go with the way your brain thinks. Don't try and do it like someone else!
- Keep the categories/file tabs SIMPLE and broad.
- Use as few as possible. That means easier filing for you which means your filing is more likely to get done!!
- If you like color, use color. If you are used to alphabetized files, make them in alphabetical order. If you think by category (this is me!), arrange them by category.
- Keep it simple. Get it done! You can always change it later.

If you are backlogged

If you are backlogged with paper piles, bags or secret-long-forgotten-stashes, take a breath and relax. No need to get overwhelmed or you will stay stuck!

Follow these steps:

1. Buy an inbox or find a box you already own and make it your inbox!
2. Ask yourself, "How can I get rid of this paper?" as you process each current paper.
3. Create a command center/action file.
4. As you come across paper that fits into the three categories – Temporary, Yearly or Long term, create a file. For example, you have a bank statement sent in the mail that you want to keep. Make a file called BANK. Write it in pencil. File your statement. That's it! Do this until most of the papers coming in have a home.
5. THEN, commit to sorting through 4 inches or 20 minutes of OLD paper every day.
 - a. Put boxes or laundry baskets out and label each with a piece of colored paper or post it. One is recycle, one is shred, one is file, one is deal with (which can be broken down later into memories, photos, read, file...)
 - b. As fast as you can, touch each of the papers in the 4 inches and get it put into one of those baskets.
 - c. Now you have a choice – deal with the four baskets right away or keep up this process until all your old paper is sorted! Then deal with each basket.





Use a 4-7 drawer file tower⁷ for tax supporting documents. Label each drawer a year for the past 3 – 7 years (ask your accountant how many years you need to keep) and throw in ALL paper for that year in the corresponding drawer! When you clean out your files for this next year you can take the oldest year's papers out, shred them and label the drawer for the new year. Keep this up, and you will always have your tax papers in the same place!

Tie the cleaning out your files with taxes. Every tax season when gathering together your tax documents, clean out each file, purge what you can and store all of what you would like to keep in your tax tower in the drawer for this year! WOW, you now have your tax papers ready for your accountant, your files cleaned out for the year AND a place to store what you need (your tax tower)! Incredible!

Don't let the paper control you!

Kitchen

Use the inside of cabinet doors to simply tape things such as important phone numbers, a small Ziploc baggie to collect box tops, safe snack lists, a grilling guide, etc. They will be easily accessible but unseen!

Can you always find a pen when you need one? Adjust the shelves in a kitchen cabinet (by the phone?) and use a small three drawer plastic tower⁸ for pens and pencils and markers.

Make a recipe binder⁹. You will instantly have a spot for those computer printed recipes, recipes you've ripped out of magazines to try and your favorite handwritten recipe cards from your grandmother all in ONE book.

Tie the cleaning out your refrigerator to naturally occurring events. When you get home from a big grocery shopping trip, clean out the old food, wipe down shelves and clean out the drawers before putting the groceries away.

Take one cabinet every once in a while and pull everything out, wash it down, and purge as much as you can from it! Ahh, enjoy the accomplishment.

Think in zones or centers. Are all of your baking supplies, measuring spoons and baking pans in the same area? If possible move them together to create a 'baking center'. Are all your coffee filters, mugs, coffee and teas in the same cabinet? Move them together to create a 'beverage center'.





Save those little square or rectangular tabs from bread, potato and apple bags. Snap them onto your charger cords to label them. Write what cord it is on the tab. Simple and FREE!

I cut the top off of a Sam's Club cereal box (any sturdy box), put it into my Tupperware drawer and store my round lids in one and square lids in another.

Are you eating your spinach? Use those bigger spinach containers to store various things in. They are clear plastic, so you

can see what is in it. I use them in my pantry and store oatmeal packets in one, nuts in another, drink mixes in another.

If you only invest in one kitchen item make it a six to eight inch chef's knife¹⁰. You will wonder how you made it this far without it! Try Wüsthof, Shun or Zwilling brands. (I am going to do this!! My client said that she gave her 80-year-old mother one who said she can't believe she lived her life without it! I use a steak knife for everything!! I can't wait for my onions to cut like butter!)

Food **Food**

Chop extra onion, and store it in a Ziploc freezer bag in the freezer. Less crying! Rub your fingers on your metal faucet (or something else metal) to remove the smell.

Buttermilk, whipping cream, butter and cream cheese all freeze well and can be thawed overnight for your baking pleasure.

Scoop ice cream balls and refreeze on a cookie sheet. Transfer into a bowl and store in your freezer until the party. When it is time for cake and ice cream, pull out the bowl and serve a pre-scooped ice cream with your cake! No dripping or rock solid ice cream while celebrating!

Freeze ketchup and mustard packets leftover from your fast food run to serve as mini ice packs for those little boo-boo's.

To extend the life...

- Cut up strawberries right after you buy them. Line a Tupperware with a paper towel and store them in the refrigerator covered.
- Place a paper towel over your spinach, lettuce or salad and store upside down in a container.
- Store sour cream upside down in the refrigerator.
- Leave the root end on the onion until you use it up.





Clothing

Add an extra clothing rod¹¹ in your closet. This works great for children and in older closets. It lowers the bar so they can reach their own clothes and adds twice the amount of rod space.

Use drawer dividers¹² in your drawers. It is amazing what it does to keep things in order!

Shelf dividers¹³ keep shirts, jeans and sweaters looking neat on shelves!

To start organizing and purging your closet can be overwhelming. I like to turn around and walk out and say I will do it another day! Break it down by pulling out all the white clothes. Purge what you know you haven't worn, doesn't fit and doesn't make you feel good when you have it on. Put the white back in the closet on one end of your rod. Take yellow items out. Repeat process until you closet is not only purged but color

coordinated! Of course only keep what you love, feel good in and have worn in the last year!

Are you fooling yourself about what you wore this season?? Go to your closet and turn your hangers around – hang them backwards on the rod. As you wear your clothes hang them back in the right way. At the end of the season whichever hangers are not turned around are the proof you need to purge those items!

Use hotel shower caps to store shoes in your suitcase or closet. It will keep them from getting dusty or scratched.

Invest in huggable hangers – the velvet ones. They keep items that tend to slide off hangers securely hung. They are also very thin allowing for more room in your closet.

Place a dryer sheet in your drawers to keep items smelling fresh.

Bathroom

Keep what you use every day in a cool basket¹⁴ that you can leave on the counter or easily pull out each day.

Add hooks or rods for extra towels and your robe (but don't buy them and leave them there for months!) Try a 3M removeable hook¹⁵ first to make sure you like the location.

Remove bars of soap from their original packaging. Store them in a basket or an open Ziploc baggie. This will dry them out causing them to last a lot longer in the shower and the soap dish will be easier to clean!





Jewelry

Jewelry

Use a bamboo placemat to hang your earrings on. Hang it with the bamboo going horizontal. If you want to add your necklaces, put nails or hooks in between the bamboo.

Take an oversized, old frame. Glue corkboard in it. Use thumbtacks or hooks inserted into the cork to hang and store your jewelry. Hang on your wall.

Garage

Garage

Put hooks (or simple nails) in the garage to hang winter coats, backpacks and caps.

Get a container for sports equipment and sports balls. Find one that has shelves and/or shallow baskets, so you don't forget what you have in the bottom.

Hang bikes and other bigger items from the ceiling.

Separate car items, paint supplies, cleaning supplies, old rags or whatever else you have in the garage and store in clear bins or crates on shelves.

Use a system like the Gladiator®¹⁷ from GarageWorks to hang and store items on your walls.

Install pegboard over a work bench to hang tools on. Galvanized steel pegboard is amazing looking.

Linen closet

Linen Closet

Each time you put away clean towels or sheets, straighten out the towels and sheets that are in there! This seems obvious but what a difference it makes! Put the beach towels in one stack, white towels in one stack, etc.

Use a lazy susan¹⁶ and/or the plastic drawers for medicines.

Fold the fitted and flat sheets and then place them together inside one pillowcase to store the set.

Laundry

Laundry

Fold and hang as you pull clothes out of the dryer! Do not put them in a laundry basket. If you can't fold right then, leave them in there and fluff them right before you are ready to fold them.





Hang more clothes. I hang all of my kid's shirts - even t-shirts - in the closet. The kids have more closet space than drawer space, they can see what they have AND the shirts are wrinkle-free! (Note: One of my sons even keeps the shirts in his closet in color order!!! I helped him do it and he maintains it because HE wants to! WOW, huh!? I wouldn't require this of your children unless it was their desire!)

I remember to do laundry when I start putting my kids to bed because my

laundry room is upstairs. I start a load and then transfer it later that night, etc. Our pastor's wife once said that we do have servants that work for us: our dishwashers, our washing machines, our refrigerators, etc. Laundry is a neverending task but I am thankful I am not down at the river with my washboard.

Pray for whoever's clothes you are folding!
Laundry can be time well spent! ♥

Children **Children**

I thought it was appropriate to add this valuable tip one more time! Teach your kids to "PUT THEIR FREAKIN' CRAP AWAY AFTER THEY GET IT OUT!" The key for the parents is to be sure their child's things have a HOME so that they KNOW exactly where to put them away! Have the child help you designate a home for each of their things.

Allow and provide one 'special box' for each child to keep in their room (you decide the size). This is where they keep their "special" stuff...rock collections, awards, erasers, bouncy balls, souvenirs, drawings, etc. Containing is a good practice for all of us. Once the container is full, you must get rid of something old to add something new.

Separate the toy area and/or bedroom by activities (kitchen play, sports, homework, dolls, reading) and then store items used in each activity as close together as you can. For example, put a chair and lamp next to the bookshelf to create a 'reading area'.

Use clear containers to store items in. You can still label, but you immediately see the contents.

Make storage for kid's items easy. The more complicated the system, the more frustrating and difficult it will be to get them to put things away properly.

Add a kid's ball cap holder¹⁸ to the back of their door to store baseball caps.

Be creative to display your child's ribbons and medals. Hang a wire across the top of a wall. Wrap it tightly around a nail at each end of the wall or across their window like a curtain. Hang the ribbons from the wire.





When helping your children purge their room, pull everything out. Rearrange the furniture. Help them sort the items and only bring back in what they need and love. The process is hard work; but by doing this, you help them develop a desire for the feelings that organization brings. They can find what they need. They feel proud of their room. They feel calm and restful in their room. Be sure to talk about these feelings with them.

At the change of seasons have a party with snacks and music to try on clothes as you switch winter and summer wardrobes.

Use a ribbon that you have to hang bows and clippies on. It can be as simple as tacking it behind their door so that it is hanging down. Clip all their bows and clips to it. Now they can see what they have, get to it easily and put them away! I am currently using a thin, fabric belt! I thought it was a ribbon, but my daughter corrected me!

Out of the House it Goes **Out OF THE house**

Because we have so much coming into our homes, we **MUST** have a plan to get things out.

Having a designated place for things like returns, donations and other's belongings that have ended up in your home is important. I put returns and other's things in my car immediately, so they are there in my face next time I am running errands.

Keep a basket or plastic bin labeled "donate" in your closet or the laundry area for clothes you need to get rid of. When you are going to drop off donations, transfer the clothes to a plastic bag and take them with you.

Keep a tub, box or trash bag by the recycle bins in the garage to drop donation items in. Knowing you have a spot for them will allow you to follow through on a decision to purge them.

Misc **Miscellaneous**

Find benches and furniture that have storage in them; but be sure to specify it for something specific (i.e. games, boots, etc.), otherwise it will fill up with junk!

If you get deodorant on your shirt, use a pair of panty hose to rub it off. Amazing!

Use one color of wrapping paper and one color of ribbon for all gift wrapping . For example, blue wrapper and silver ribbon would work for all occasions. Simplify.

Or, buy the brown packing wrap and decorate with ribbon or have your kids decorate the paper with drawings and notes. Skip out on a card by writing To and From on the paper. This brown packing wrap is available at Walmart near the pens and envelopes.





About Tracy Hoth

About Tracy Hoth...

Tracy Hoth grew up cutting wood, showing horses and helping in their enormous garden. She learned, at a young age, the skill of working hard! Aside from membership in the National Association of Professional Organizers, Faithful Organizers and Elizabeth Hagen's SuccessPlus Coaching Program she is a member of her own family of six ~ her committed husband and four school age children.

Not limited to speaking, organizing and virtual coaching/organizing, Tracy is an official carpool mom, the 1977 Minnesota State Fair Pet Pony Champion, a pretzel M&M lover, a University of North Texas graduate, women's ministry team member at her church and currently on the hunt to find the perfect iced coffee!



Tracy began Simply Squared Away in 2008 after recognizing what a difference being organized made in her own life. Now, passionate to share with other women, she speaks on how organization and learning to ask the right questions can help move thoughts into actions...dreams into reality!

Tracy can be contacted:

Via email: Tracy@TracyHoth.com

Via phone: 816.820.8848

Browse her website and blog: www.TracyHoth.com

“Being grateful for what you DO have changes your entire outlook!” ~ Tracy Hoth
“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks** through Him to God the Father.” Colossians 3:17 NASB





Index

- 1 Car organizer:** Search “car organizer” to see the assortment. Choose based on the size and style you need!
- 2 Purse organizer:** So many options! Search “purse organizer”. Prices range from \$10 - \$55. My friend sent me mine from the Philippines.
- 3 Carabiner:** Rei.com has high quality carabiners or find one for under \$3 at Walmart or Target!
- 4 Inbox:** Look at Clever Container’s “Document Boxes”.
- 5 Action file/Command center:** Picture @ my blog - (1) March 26, 2011 “[The Command Center](#)” and (2) September 1, 2010 “[Paper, Paper Everywhere](#)”
- 6 Identity Theft Guard Stamp:** \$8.50, Amazon.com or Bed, Bath & Beyond
- 7 4-7 drawer file tower:** Go to Sterilite.com + storage + drawer carts to get an idea of what I mean. I use smaller clear plastic tubs that seal tightly and are all the same size. I label them and stack them on a shelf in my basement.
- 8 Small 3 drawer file tower:** Go to Sterilite.com and search for “3 Drawer Desk Top Unit”. Find at Walmart.
- 9 Recipe Binder:** Picture and tutorial @ my blog – (1) August 30, 2010 “[Organizing Your Recipes – Part I](#)” and (2) “[Organizing Your Recipes – Part II](#)”.
- 10 Chef’s Knife:** Wüsthof, Shun and Zwilling brands can be found at Crate & Barrel, William Sonoma and Sur la Table.
- 11 Clothing rod:** Search ‘Heavyweight Double Hang Closet Rod’; \$14.99 at Bed, Bath & Beyond; [Before and after pictures](#) @ my blog
- 12 Drawer dividers:** Search ‘expandable Spring loaded drawer dividers’; \$15.99 at Bed, Bath & Beyond; [Before and after pictures](#) @ my blog
- 13 Shelf dividers:** Search ‘shelf dividers’ at the containerstore.com; [Before and after pictures](#) @ my blog
- 14 Basket on bathroom counter:** Picture @ my blog - October 28, 2010 “[Small Project – Organizing a Bathroom Countertop](#)”. Basket found at Pier 1 Imports.
- 15 3M hooks:** 3M Command hooks now come in all shapes and sizes! Available most everywhere.
- 16 Lazy Susan:** search ‘lazy susan’ at www.thecontainerstore.com
- 17 Gladiator® GarageWorks:** www.gladiatorgarageworks.com
- 18 Over the door cap rack:** Organizeit.com, \$5.99

