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Here's this month's edition with organizing and re-design ideas.



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TAX TIME

In the next couple of months, you'll want to assess your paperwork situation in regards to preparing tax returns. Whether you do it yourself or pay a professional, it is important to keep records all year long, and you'll appreciate your record-keeping on April 15th.



For each tax year, get a hanging folder and add a tab labeled something like "For 2009 Taxes". Think ahead to what the tax returns require, then simply create a file folder for it. If you deduct for a home business or your husband's work expenses, set up a file titled that and anytime you get receipts or documented expenses in that category, stick it in there. Keep track of daycare costs for tax purposes? Make a folder titled "Daycare Payments". Don't worry about organizing the contents -- just getting in the right folder is sufficient now. All the file folders go into hanging folder(s).

Do this filing throughout the year, and when tax time comes around the following calendar year, pull out the hanging folder. You may still need some additional files or paperwork (i.e. W-2 forms you receive) but other-



wise everything is together. Then, remove the pile of receipts or papers within each folder and tally them up. Once they are paper clipped, add a sticky note with the total to make the data entry part easier. Remember, you don't have to do any organizing, totaling or such to the things you put into the folder until the year is over.

Fun Factoids From the National Assn of Professional Organizers

According to a recent survey conducted on behalf of NAPO:

- 71% said their quality of life would improve if they were better organized.
- 65% described their home as at least moderately disorganized
- 27% said disorder keeps them from being effective at work

A 2003 study claimed:

- getting rid of clutter eliminates 40% of housework in an average home
- 80% of the clutter in most homes is a result of disorganization, not lack of space.



According to a 2004 study conducted by a Boston marketing firm:

- the average American burns 55 minutes a day -- roughly 12 weeks a year -- looking for things they know they own but can't find



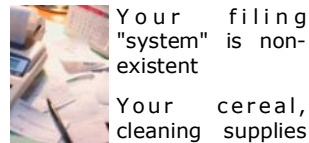
IKEA did a 2001 survey of customers in which 31% reported they were more satisfied after clearing out their closets than they were after sex.

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You Know You Have Clutter If...

You have a closet that you won't even open because its contents are too overwhelming to deal with or don't even know what's in there anymore

Your garage has no room for a car



Your filing "system" is non-existent

Your cereal, cleaning supplies & old photos all share the same closet or shelf

You're always tripping over stacks of unread magazines, books and catalogs

You can never find the latest soccer schedule, birthday party invite or dental appointment reminder in all of your piles

Your family photos from the past 10 or 20 years are gathering dust in an old cardboard box

Your inability to find anything in a timely manner means you're often late for school, work & appointments

You have trouble letting go of "stuff"

There's an area in your home that has been piling up and you've "been meaning to get to it"

You have a "junk" drawer, "junk" closet or "junk" room

QUICKIE TIPS

- ⇒ Keep tangible clutter at bay by following the *one in, one out* rule: Whenever you get a new item (sweater, book, set of sheets, etc), donate/throw 1 of the same item.
- ⇒ When items are in vertical piles on shelves or in drawers, you can ensure an even rotation of usage by putting newly cleaned items on the *bottom* of the pile. That way, items recently used are not always being grabbed for.
- ⇒ Keep gift cards and store/retail coupons (i.e. a gift certificate to a restaurant or a Starbucks gift card) in your car. If you don't want to lug them in your purse, contain them in a memorable spot in the car -- chances are, anytime you'd use them, you'd be driving. Every so often go through to toss expired ones and remind yourself what you have.

