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Here's this month's edition with organizing and redesign ideas.

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If you are having any problems or issues with paper or time management, clutter, organizational systems or interior redesign, let me know!

According to *Space Savers.com*, these documents "need to be kept for at least **seven** years:

- Income tax returns (state and federal) with all supporting documentation. Usually tax returns will be audited within 3 years. Sometimes, an audit may be held 6 years after the return is filed. Therefore it is wise to keep tax returns and all tax documentation for the last 7 years. If you haven't kept your past tax returns, they are available from the IRS for a fee.
- Wage/salary records and annual payroll check stubs. This would include W-2's, 1099's, etc.
- Cancelled checks and bank statements (*unless available online*).
- Monthly statements including information from the bank, brokers, mutual funds, 401(k) and other retirement plans, individual retirement accounts (IRAs), Roth IRAs, and 529 college savings plans.
- Guarantees and warranties. Write the date and place of purchase on the guarantee or warranty. Keep records of the type

and date of all repairs.

These documents need to be kept **forever**:

- Your will (file a back-up copy with your attorney).
- Birth certificates, death certificates, marriage licenses, prenuptial agreements, alimony and child-custody agreements, divorce decrees, adoption papers, military records, and citizenship papers.
- Passports
- Your health care power of attorney, which gives someone the right to make medical decisions for you if you become incapacitated.
- Copies of your IRA, 401(k) and other retirement account participation plans. These forms determine what happens to the money in these accounts when you die, not your will. If you haven't kept copies of the forms that name your plan beneficiaries, contact your retirement plan custodians for a copy. Keep your beneficiary names and addresses current.



- All your current insurance policies including home, health, disability, and auto. If something were to happen to your home, you need to have copies of these in a protected place.



- Keep documents showing the dates and cost of improvements to your current home. These records can help in the case of a dispute over damage from flood, fire, or other disasters and can help the insurance company cover your losses.

- You should keep bills/receipts for big purchases (e.g., jewelry, appli-



ances, cars, collectibles, etc.) for proof of their value in the event of loss or damage. Take pictures of these items as well and file with the receipts.

- Deeds, property titles, mortgages, stock and bond certificates, and employment contracts.
- Automobile/vehicle, truck, and farm machinery titles. When you sell it, give the maintenance records to the new owner along with the title.



Store 'forever' documents in a safe deposit box at the bank or a fireproof box in your home. If you choose to rent a safe deposit box, it is a good idea to make an inventory of the contents. Consider keeping the files in waterproof bags (inside the fireproof box) to protect them in case of flooding, too."



TIP! When you write your grocery list, try to divide your items by category for produce, meat, dairy, etc. so that you only have to hit an aisle once. You can draw a large cross shape, separating the paper into 4 sections before you start your list.

Decluttering by Dumping

Isn't it so fun to pull out everything from a closet and cabinet and reorganize? Ok, maybe it's just me. I like pulling everything out, making the closet, shelves or space all empty and admiring the view. Forget the pile and mess you created when you took everything out -- just admire the clean blank slate. By doing so, you'll be more tempted to put things away sparsely, in a clean and orderly fashion. This is also a great opportunity to vacuum, wipe or dust the surfaces, or re-line a drawer.

Another good thing about 'starting from scratch' is that you see all your things, on the floor, including some stuff you

thought you lost, misplaced or things that need to be tossed. You can sort through and purge more easily because it is all in your face. Clients hate when I dump out a drawer or empty off a shelf and put the contents in a big pile. It is shocking and a bit off-putting, but it is a great way to deal with it -- physically touching all items -- and move on.

So you've covered the floor with a pile of stuff, now what? First toss the trash or odds 'n' ends that no longer matter. When you get to that random doodad that you have no idea what to do with (i.e. a screw or button), you have only 2 options. Toss or keep to use/put away that day. Generally if you have done without it that long, it is a safe bet to toss. Also get rid of or donate anything you no longer can use, want or need.



Then begin evaluating what is left, presumably 'keep' items. Decide whether you want to keep the item(s) in the space you emptied (in that room or on that shelf) or somewhere else. Separate items according to those 2 decisions. Do NOT get up and take those objects into another room -- just set aside. Otherwise, you might get distracted.

Now you should have the 'keep for that space' pile left. Consider now *how* you'd like the items to be contained. You may decide to add more containers, do some labeling or add some type of product or system, or do nothing but replace some contents. But either way, what goes back in is *only* what you *want* to be there. Finally, it will give you a sense of accomplishment. Remember, there's still progress to be made even if you only do 1 drawer, 1 shelf or 1 bin. So start dumping!



- PM

