

Get Organized

Staying organized is a continual process, not a one time event—it's like saying, "I've showered before, but I never seem to stay clean, so I don't bother anymore." Life and the process of living tend to create chaos, so it requires a regular input of energy to re-create order. However, disorganization of objects is often partly caused by disorganization of time because the person doesn't have enough time to sort through things and put them where they belong. Other people could have endless time and still not get everything organized because they lack a good system for putting things away. If so, you will need to work with someone else to help you create that better organizational system. In either case, taking the time to go through your stuff and making the hard choices to get rid of some things will probably make it easier to organize the rest.

- Actively restrict the flow of new objects into your world, such as mail, email, magazines, newspapers, and things you buy. Some of this stuff comes in all by itself, so you need to actually expend energy to keep it out. It's like bailing an old, leaky boat—you try your best to plug the holes, but there will always be some bailing to do.
- Increase the outflow of objects to at least equal the inflow, unless you need to be on a "junk diet" in which case more needs to go out.
- Create a better organization system—often things don't get put away because they are homeless and don't have any clear place to go. Alternatively, their place is out of the way or not easily accessible. Creating a better, easier organizational system can help with this and make it more likely that things will get put away.
- Things should be put away or filed based on how they will be retrieved—and how often. If it's unlikely that you will need to track down a particular item, then it's probably not worth keeping it super organized. So, don't spend more time organizing than you save by being organized.
- Sometimes ADHD adults have trouble finding filed papers because they don't remember how they were filed away. It may be better to file by category, such as financial, personal, medical, legal, and so on, and then have subfolders within each of those. Your filing system must be memorable, which is more likely if it's personally meaningful, rather than using someone else's system whole cloth.
- Take pictures occasionally to track your progress, or lack thereof, in getting control of the chaos. Progress can be motivating and lack of progress can re-light the fire.
- If organization and follow through are weak points, try to work with someone else to keep you on track, if feasible.
- Even though it can seem like it, keeping everything "just in case you need it," isn't really all that helpful if you can't find the right thing at the right time.
- Everything has some value, but that doesn't mean that it's worth saving since everything you keep makes it harder to find something else that may be more important