

Paper piling up

If you look away for a couple of days does the paper seem to be spreading all around the house, multiplying and piling up? With all the paper we collect on a daily basis, is it any wonder that it gets out of hand?



Lost papers

Not to mention the horrible panicky feeling when we can't find an important document or lose track of our finances. With the introduction of computers we had all dreamed of a paper-less society but it seems to be much worse now doesn't it?

Creating more paper

How many of us print out emails, keep hard copies of letters, invoices and bills, collect scraps of paper with recipes, phone numbers or tear attractive pictures out of magazines? It all adds to the paper pile and I guarantee that at least 50% of the paper in your home or office is unnecessary. It just takes time and patience to start a paperwork purge, but by getting on top of it you will feel more in control of your every day life

Where does it all come from?

- Through your post box come letters, cards, magazines, junk mail, advertisements, catalogues, circulars and all kinds of sales promotions
- On your office desk your in tray fills with letters, reminders, schedules, articles, forms and memos, not to mention all the documents you feel you must print for 'safekeeping'
- Your children bring home school and college letters, homework, timetables, uniform lists, PE reminders, fundraising notes and school trip forms
- Not to mention your personal papers like your driving licence, passport, birth certificates, important documents and policies, guarantees, instructions for electrical goods and appliances

Try some of these tips to rid yourself of all that unnecessary papers and it won't take you so long to take care of the ones that do matter

1. Discard the junk

When the post comes through the letter box sift through it immediately. Discard ALL sales literature, catalogues, take-away menus, offers and competitions. Have a paper recycling bin nearby and separate all the paper from the plastic and window envelopes. Cut away or shred any references to your name, address, account numbers, card numbers etc. Keep any brochures, journals or sales literature you want to read in a tray or basket and ONLY pick it up when you have TIME to read it



I collect my brochures and sales literature in a basket beside my desk and only pick it up or take it with me when I know I will have some waiting time on my hands

2. Deal With It

Gather together the items that must be dealt with: bill payments, responses to letters, requests for information, anything that demands a reply

3. Date It

If you have a lot of letters and bills to respond to, sort them in date order and write the 'respond by' date in the top right hand corner of the letter in red pen. Do not file these papers until you have dealt with them

4. Delay the posting

If you spend one hour per week writing cheques and response letters you can put them in ready to post in envelopes, addressed and stamped. Put a small Post-it note on the front with the date by which it must be posted and keep them by the front door. You can grab the next one in line as you go out of the door. This is also great for keeping up with birthday cards. Buy them, write them, address the envelope and stamp them all ahead of time and also put them with their Post-it note by the door

5. Direct Debits

Direct Debits are the best way to stop those paper bills from piling up, especially if you forget to pay them on time. Pay bills by monthly Direct Debit, spreading the cost over the year to avoid surprises. Companies will send you the right forms to fill in to give to your bank
www.nationaldebtline.co.uk for free and confidential independent advice
www.thedebtfreestudent.co.uk

6. Do It Now

If you have a piece of information, a statement or document that can be filed without any response then put it away immediately. If you don't have time keep a 'to be filed tray' and spend twenty minutes a week filing. Keep 'like with like': all house insurances, all car documents, all work related papers, all instructions and guarantees, all travel documents etc.

7. Drop it in the right place

Rather than leave papers piling up around the house find a home for each category. If you don't have a filing cabinet you could keep important papers in a metal box file or a card or plastic concertina file (WH Smiths, Staples)

8. Dump them

Dump all those little scraps of paper with phone numbers and notes on. Post-it notes are handy but can look like confetti when there are too many littering your house or desk. If you need to make notes, write them in a notebook and transfer to the appropriate place when you have time

9. Don't make more

Don't make more paper by printing out a hard copy of emails or information off the internet. Don't photocopy items unless absolutely necessary. Learn how to trust and use your PC to store information. If necessary buy some extra hard drive space to back up your files daily. The *Western Digital My Book 2* is a small box that can sit on your desk. Available in PC World, Dixons and from www.amazon.co.uk

10. Dedicated storage

Dedicated storage is a must if you collect or store any papers that need to be found again efficiently

- Magazine files for storing catalogues, magazines, trade brochures
- Ring Binders for bills paid, statements
- Plastic or card wallets for instruction booklets, games' rules, school homework books and papers
- Box files for lumpy items like mobile phone and computer information (and cables), odd shaped booklets
- Concertina files labelled with months of the year to collect tickets for upcoming events, directions to events, party invitations, receipts
- Portable hanging file for children's school papers, tests, trip information
- Use a family notice board for incoming papers and notes
- Place mail in trays or racks for each member of the household, if it strays, put it back in the rack!
- Make use of a letter rack in the hall to collect outgoing mail
- Buy the **Space Organising Binders** to keep all these organising notes in one handy file. Visit www.spaceorganising.com



Tip: To stop unsolicited mail register with the **Mail Preference Service**
 DMA House, 70 Margaret Street, London W1W 8SS
 Phone MPS 020 7291 3310
www.mpsonline.org.uk

11. Declutter your files once a year

Depending on when you seem to have a glut of paper arriving (sometimes it is at the end of a tax year if you are self employed, sometimes it coincides with the date you bought your house) As the new piece of paperwork arrives, swap it for the old one in your filing cabinet . This works well for car and house insurances. Last year's is out of date as soon as the new one arrives. Keep all statements and receipts for seven years if you are self employed but put each year into a card wallet, labelled with the tax year (which always runs from April 6th to April 5th)

12. Decorate scrapbooks



A great way to use up all your bits and pieces of memorabilia. Buy ready made scrapbooks or use ring binders with loose plastic leaves to collect recipes, magazine cuttings, photos, memories of holidays and special events. If your memories are precious then why not make them special?

13. Dump back copies of old magazines

Give them to the doctor's waiting room or to a playgroup to cut up. Arrange with friends to buy one copy and circulate amongst the group so that you all get to read several without having to buy them all. Included here are brochures, trade magazines, TV mags, hobby monthlies, collector's magazines etc. We all feel we have to keep years and year's worth of these lovely glossy photos and reams of valuable information. If you must keep them sort them into date order and keep them stacked upright in labelled magazine files. Think twice though before you keep hundreds of back copies of any magazine, they are not usually worth much, heavy to send through the post if you sell them on Ebay and often of little interest to most other people



14. Display the best and file the rest

Children's artwork piles up rapidly and although I would be the last person to say 'throw it away'. After a few months you can select the best from each stage of development



Buy an art portfolio (the corrugated plastic types are economical and lightweight) and as each piece of art arrives, date it, label it with the child's name, display it for a week, then either throw it away or put it in the portfolio. I keep several dated folders in the loft ready to hand back to each child should they ever want to see where their creative streak began

15. Dive into your photo collection

Make the most of the dark winter evenings by sorting your photo collection once and for all. Discard all the repeats, the unattractive shots and the multiple images of the same event. Invest in good photo albums and be selective. Due to the use of camera phones, digital cameras and the storage of images on our PC, traditional prints are going out of fashion. We may find that we no longer have boxes of negatives and duplicate prints hidden under the bed or on top of the wardrobe!

I hope you have enjoyed swotting up on clearing your paper mountain. It seems that paper is one of the most insidious of all types of clutter. Start with something small like your newspaper collection or giving magazines to a worthy cause

One step at a time, you will **make space for life**

Angie

If you are feeling overwhelmed and would like some help to organise your home, your business or your life contact us at - office@spaceorganising.com or visit the website to find out how we can help over the phone or by email

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