

Home is Where the

Find a place for everything and put everything in its place

Stuff is



Photos courtesy of The Container Store

by Stephanie Lauritzen

Take you and all the people in your home and think about all the things each of you have. Chances are it's a lot of stuff—a lot of stuff that often ends up hanging out in a place that isn't necessarily where it belongs, in turn becoming clutter. "Sometimes individuals spend several hours clearing a space, only to have the clutter return again in a few short weeks," says Jacquie Ross, professional organizer and owner of CastAway the Clutter, serving the greater Baltimore area. "Maintaining order is an ongoing process and cannot be fixed in one day or a weekend." Homeless items do nothing more than create chaos and sap sanity. They get lost, and lead to hours wasted hunting for them. Stop putting off organizing your home. It's time to escape clutter chaos with help from the pros.

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One step at a time

The first key to successful organization is realizing that there is no such thing as an instant fix. Nadine Sachs, owner of Organized2Succeed, serving the greater Baltimore area, agrees with Ross' sentiment about maintaining order. "Set up systems that are easy and convenient and can therefore be maintained," Sachs says. It is best to create a plan with smaller steps to reach your ultimate goal. "Write your organizing goals down," Ross encourages, "and be specific." The following 12 expert tips will keep you from becoming overwhelmed:

1. Ask for help. Skip LaBella, president of Thompson Creek Interiors in Lanham, suggests you bring in an outside perspective. "When I'm at home, I can feel paralyzed, but I go to someone else's place and find great solutions," he says. Consider the assistance of a professional organizer or friend.

2. "Have the right supplies handy," Sachs says. "You'll need a trash can, a recycle container, a bag for donation items and a container to hold those items that need to be rerouted to another location."

3. If you have multiple areas that need to be organized, **begin with the room you use the most** and stick with it. When you complete one area, celebrate and move on to the next.

4. Allow plenty of time. Depending on the area, schedule a couple of hours on your calendar. "Allow as little distraction as possible," Sachs recommends. "No phone calls and hire a baby sitter if you have young children." ▶