

Improving Your Home Office

by [Jacquie Ross](#)

Time Saving Tips for an Efficient and Organized Office

Today's home offices are busier than ever. Gone are the days when all we needed was a writing desk, small filing cabinet and a few envelopes and stamps. Many home owners now have separate home offices, outfitted with computers, printers, fax machines, copiers, scanners and more.

How is your home office doing? Do you have a clear desk, comfortable seating, good lighting and a place for everything? Or is it an overwhelming cluttered space, full of papers and unidentified objects? Home offices need not be disorganized, boring and sterile. Even an office situated in a basement with poor natural light can be transformed into a bright and cheerful environment with good lighting and decorative accessories.

Before you get started on improving your home office, it is important to identify all of the activities that take place in there. Are you simply paying a few bills, filing some statements and sorting mail? Or do you also like to use the space for your children to do homework, browsing on the internet, sorting photographs and wrapping gifts? If you are running a home-based business, it's important that you try to keep it separate from your household office, even if it's just in another area of the room.

For your home office to function properly it should be comfortable, with functional and ergonomic furniture. It should also be free of paper clutter. Invest in office organizing products to keep paper clutter at bay, so that you can enjoy your office, instead of fearing it! I have listed a few of the typical activities that take place in today's home offices. If you also run a home business, it is imperative that you have the necessary office supplies and equipment to run your business efficiently. Use this as a guideline to help you to organize your space:

❖ **Sorting Mail & Paying Bills:** Purchase an organizer with slots, trays or cubbies to divide up bills, mail, envelopes, stamps and address labels. As soon as a bill comes in, place it into the appropriate slot immediately!

Jacquie's Tip: A mail organizer with a small drawer for stamps and small office supplies will keep your desktop neat.

❖ **Accessing Office Supplies:** Your everyday office supplies should be kept at arm's length on your desk or in your desk drawers immediately!

Jacquie's Tip: Avoid messy drawers by purchasing compartmented junk drawer organizers.

❖ **Checking Your Schedule:** Place a monthly calendar on the wall so that you can quickly view upcoming events.

Jacquie's Tip: Use a magnetic dry erase message board to write brief notes and reminders.

❖ **Dealing with Action Items:** You might feel more comfortable keeping your action papers on your desk in a "neat" pile, for fear of losing or forgetting them. Unfortunately, papers left out can be easily misplaced or even accidentally thrown away. There are many different options available for organizing your day-to-day papers, including desktop trays and step-up files. Consider your options and invest in organizing products that will work for you.

Jacquie's Tip: Spend a few minutes each day reviewing your action files on your desk.

❖ **Filing Papers:** A file cabinet is essential for storing important documents and statements. If you do not have a cabinet, consider purchasing a file crate or file box. Stackable file crates are convenient, affordable and take up minimal space. In addition, a fire-proof safe is recommended for important documents, such as birth certificates and passports etc.

***Jacque's Tip:** Make copies of all important personal and household documents and store them either off-site or in another part of your home.*

❖ **Looking up Telephone Numbers:** A manual or electronic rolodex is a handy tool for quickly accessing contact information.

***Jacque's Tip:** Keep the local telephone directories handy in case you want to look something up quickly. They can be stored in magazine holders or on a durable letter tray near the phone.*

❖ **Handling School Papers:** If you have school aged children, set up a system to handle all of their incoming and outgoing school papers. Try a portable hanging file holder, file crate, file cabinet or wall pockets.

***Jacque's Tip:** Show your school aged children where they need to place their school papers each day.*

❖ **Using Technology:** Identify the equipment you need for your home office. If you have space and budget constraints, but would like to have it all, consider purchasing a multifunction printer, with an integrated copier, scanner, fax machine and photo printing capabilities. You'll save space, time and money.

***Jacque's Tip:** Consider purchasing a fax/printer organizer with drawers and/or trays to hold paper and office supplies.*

Finally, don't be afraid to decorate your office! This is not a corporate office, so decorate it as you wish. Use color and accessories to liven up your space. This is your space, so make it one that you will love to be in!

Jacque Ross is a Professional Organizer and owner of CastAway the Clutter and [Halo Organizers](#), an organizing tips website. Jacquie also writes online and has an Organization Tips page at [Home Storage USA](#). A member of the National Association of Professional Organizers, she teaches homeowners and small home based business owners how to reclaim their time and space. Visit Halo Organizers and sign up for [free organizing tips](#).