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Ask the Experts: How to Organize Your Desk





It seems like our desks at home and the office are always a challenge to keep organized. But, there are simple ways to tidy them up!

"Where's the tape dispenser I just used five minutes ago?" "What happened to the 10 pens I had sitting on my desk yesterday?"

You may be asking yourself these types of questions everyday after staring at your unorganized desk, wondering why you can never find anything. Are you nodding your head yes? Well, the pens and tape dispenser are probably buried underneath paperwork. Let's face it, we spend more time sitting at our desks at home or in the office than doing anything else.

So, it's no wonder our desks are unorganized!

Luckily, we talked to two professional organizers about **how to organize office desks** and keep them organized. Amy Trager, a certified professional organizer, says our desks get so unorganized because usually, it's a dumping ground. "Mail, newspapers, homework... it never ends! Dropping things on the desk for later is common."

"Organizing can sometimes be overwhelming," says Lynda Rothman, Owner of Sane Jane - Professional Organizing. "Set yourself up for success and start small. Perhaps you empty out one drawer or cabinet at a time."

What We Need at Our Desks and What We Don't

At work, you need something to write with and a pad of paper, Trager says. "If there are certain tools needed for your profession, those should be at hand, as well. A calculator, ruler, special computer equipment, proper lighting and a comfortable place to write or use your computer. Otherwise, you'll never want to be there!"

Most people have knick-knacks, picture frames and plants that might brighten up and personalize the space, but also have the potential to crowd usable work space. Try to consolidate, she suggests. One to-do list and one calendar are all anyone ever needs.

Trager says the home desk isn't too different from the work desk. But at home, all kinds of things find their way to the desk that don't need to be there! "Candy, toys, clothes and pictures. Keep the desk as a designated workspace. Homework, bills and computer games are reasonable tasks to happen at the home desk," she says.

Rothman says it depends on your profession, but generally this is what you need:

- Computer and printer
- Stamps and white envelopes
- Pads and post-it notes
- A few pens and two colors of highlighters
- A shredder, file cabinet and recycle bin
- A stash of paper, empty file folders, and designated Sharpie for file labels or a label maker

"What I don't do is keep books I no longer need at work. They get donated or returned or if they are so valuable for future reference, they go in the bookcase. I also don't collect an endless array of pens, or give-aways and feebies from conferences as they only end up as clutter," says Rothman.



Tips for Keeping Desks Organized

Trager's Tips

- Take care of the paperwork the day it enters the house.
- Pay bills that day. Sign permission slips immediately.
- Sort out what you need to keep at hand into categories.

Rothman's Tips

- Set a timer for 15 minutes and straighten up your desk.
- Empty the space completely.
- Ask yourself: Do I need this? When was the last time I reached for this? Can my child's school benefit from these supplies? Perhaps a colleague could use them?

About the Experts

Rothman is a former teacher and mother of two boys. She started Sane Jane because organizing and simplifying processes come natural to her. "I'm good at it, I love people, their stories and making their life simpler." You can find out more about her at sane-jane.com.

Trager completed a custom curriculum at Bradley University that included independent courses related to organizing. She then graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Family and Consumer Sciences. She is a member of the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO) and the president of the Chicago, Ill., chapter. She enjoys baking and traveling whenever possible. Find out more about her at amytrager.com.

