

Five Myths about Organization

1. You have to keep everything.

We frequently fall on the extremes of the spectrum: either we save *everything* or we get rid of everything immediately and later regret it. Your inbox might have hundreds of email just in case you need something from them in the future, you have a closet full of boxes full of papers, and you have filing cabinets where you probably waste more time looking for specific items than finding them. The core belief that you must keep everything “just in case” is responsible for all that clutters and is a major cause of disorganization in your life. Here are some facts for all of you collectors:

- Most people use only 15% of what they file.
- By determining what is usable and letting go of the rest you can consolidate information that is useful and discard the rest.
- It takes great courage to let go of past information.

Reality: You do not have to keep everything. And by getting rid of what you don't need you will feel less burdened and free, you will have more time to do what matters, and you will be able to find the information you do need when you need it.

2. There is just too much information and interruptions to be organized.

In this age of technology and social media, you are overloaded with a constant barrage of information and interruptive communications. Facebook, IMs, Twitter, SnapChat, emails, etc., constantly pop up and cause distractions. People can get a hold of you whenever and wherever they want to, regardless of what *you* want. The belief that it is impossible to stop these interruptions and organize your communication practices is another blockade on the pathway to a structured work life.

In order to become more organized in this area you need to learn a method for processing your life, whether it be your inbox, texts, class notes, etc.. Ultimately, remember that *you* are the most important component of your success. You do not have to put others first. Turn your phone off when studying and remove the icon and ding that alerts you an email has arrived. Everything can wait.

Remember, interruptions only occur when we permit them. When you constantly allow people to interrupt you, whether it is in person or by telephone, you are actually training them that it is o.k. to interrupt. Set boundaries with your friends, roommates, and even family. Let them know that if they need something they will need to bring it to you at a certain time. Politely inform them that they will be sent away and asked to come back later if they choose to interrupt. Remember to stand firm in these boundaries. Over time people will know that you mean business and they will figure out that you're more helpful to them when you're organized and able to give them your undivided attention.

Reality: You can manage the information and the interruptions, because the problem doesn't lie in the amount of information and interruptions. The problem lies with your methods of processing that information and handling the interruptions.

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3. Getting and staying organized takes too much time.

Some people believe that personal organization it takes too much time. You might believe that it is not possible to add anything new to your already overfilled work flow. Here are a few things you might be doing that would be greatly improved by getting organized:

- Reading an email message today, and then reading it again tomorrow because it is still in your inbox.
- Showing up to a class session without the required materials or the homework assignment.
- Adding tasks to your task list and then adding those same tasks to next week's task list because you forgot to do them.
- Spending too much time filing and searching for information (also known as a way to procrastinate)

Reality: You *do* have the time to get organized, due to the fact that by getting organized you will be saving yourself from the countless wasted hours and days of disorganization.

4. I am too undisciplined to be organized.

When you get up in the morning, eat breakfast, brush your teeth, get to class, etc. you are being disciplined. Discipline is something that we practice unknowingly. What you probably lack is *motivation*.

Motivation comes from the desire to do something. Don't want to get organized? Find your desire in it. This might be to save you time in the future, or help you in class, or make your life easier. Use being unorganized as an excuse to procrastinate? Reward yourself by completing tasks and then doing something enjoyable. The reality is that you are a disciplined person but the key to applying that discipline to being organized is the cultivation of motivation. Enthusiasm will provoke you to be disciplined.

5. I am not organized by nature.

This is the most important myth to dispel in order to move forward into organized productivity. The belief that you weren't born with the ability to become organized in your affairs is the number one offender on this list. Organization is not something hard coded into your D.N.A. It is a skill that can be taught, learned, and then practiced. It is actually an essentially simple skill to master once you are willing to let go of any pre-conceived notions regarding yourself and your ability to be organized.

Reality: You can be an organized and a more productive individual. All it takes to become the organized person you long to be is a willingness to learn a few techniques and to practice those techniques until they are an ingrained aspect of your work style.

Organization is not something that only certain people are capable of. Anybody, even you can learn to be an organized and productive person. If you find yourself believing otherwise, try saying to yourself, "I am an organized person," and believe it – even if the evidence hasn't shown itself quite yet.