



#### NEW ORGANIZING RULES

*Continued*

school papers into organizing supplies meant for the office can be just as uncomfortable. Fortunately, there are loads of new systems and tools created for busy households, available from retailers such as The Container Store and Stacks and Stacks ([stacksandstacks.com](http://stacksandstacks.com)).

For calendars with extra big boxes to fit all of your appointments, plus pockets for loose papers, try Amy Knapp's Big Grid Family Organizer (\$14.99, at [familyorganizer.com](http://familyorganizer.com)) or the FlyLady's I'm FLYing Calendar and FlyLady Sticker Kit (\$17.95, available at [flylady.net](http://flylady.net)). Stay on top of coupons with updated organizers such as The Couponizer (\$19.95, at [couponizer.com](http://couponizer.com)). And the Family Recipe Organizer from Family Facts (\$19.95, at [familyfacts.com](http://familyfacts.com)) will help keep your favorites close at hand.

**staying ahead of clutter**  
**Old school** Put things away as soon as you bring them home.

**Today's take** In a perfect world, we'd put everything back in its proper place as soon as we stepped in the door. But with the phone ringing, the kids clamoring for a snack or the dog waiting to be walked, it's simply unrealistic to be that organized.

Instead, station an "incoming" basket or shelf near the front door where you can corral stuff until you have a chance to deal with it. "Unless it's perishable—save that melting ice cream—it can probably wait," says Carter. Get into the habit of emptying your incoming basket regularly—in the evening after the kids have gone to bed is a good time—so things don't pile up and get out of control.

**Old school** Have a place for every item in your house.

**Today's take** In theory, this rule makes sense. If you need a screwdriver or a pair of scissors, for instance, you'll always know where to find it. But what if you keep your

scissors in a kitchen drawer for clipping coupons, but find you often need to snip off clothing tags in the bedroom? Instead of constantly running around retrieving what you need, purchase multiples and keep them where you'll use them. That might mean a pair of scissors in the laundry room, bedroom and kitchen. "I keep scissors, a letter opener, pens and pencils in an attractive cup in every room," says Ann Bingley Gallops, a professional organizer and owner of The Organized Life ([theorganizedlife.net](http://theorganizedlife.net)) in New York City.

**Old school** Keep a shelf or closet stocked with generic gifts for last-minute presents.

**Today's take** Are your girlfriends getting a little tired of receiving scented candles or floral scarves from your stash every birthday? Clean out that gift closet for good, says Carter. In most cases, giving generic presents just doesn't work.

Plus, who has the room to store all that stuff? Instead, when you're in a pinch, go online and purchase a gift card from a store your friend loves, a prepaid iTunes Music Card so she can pick songs for her iPod, or a movie or restaurant gift certificate. Have the gift cards sent to you so you can slip them into a birthday card. If it's really last-minute, many sites can instantly e-mail your pal an electronic gift certificate.

**managing your closet**  
**Old school** If you haven't worn an item of clothing in a year, toss it.

**Today's take** Admit it, you're still hanging on to dresses that haven't seen the light of day in years. Don't worry, mixing the one-year rule won't cause chaos in your closet. But Durham does suggest asking yourself four questions about each item of clothing: Do I need it? Do I use it? Do I love it? Is it loving me back? The last question will help you rule out

#### OLDIES BUT GOODIES

Professional organizers still swear by these classic tips.

- Group the clothing in your closet by type—jackets, skirts, dresses—and then by color, so you can really see what you have.
- Create a bill-paying center. It can be as simple as a basket stocked with everything you need to make payments, from your checkbook to stamps and envelopes.
- If you take it out, put it back. Follow this rule faithfully and you'll save yourself hours of cleanup.

beloved but unlattering back-of-the-closet stuff. As for pieces you can't part with for sentimental reasons: "If seeing that frilly blouse makes you feel good, then keep it for 50 years," she says. She still has the entire outfit she wore on her first date with her husband 23 years ago. Keeping a few favorites is just fine.

**Old school** Kick off organizing projects by purchasing lots of containers and supplies.

**Today's take** Stop before you shop! It's unproductive to stock up on containers when you're not sure what and how much you need to contain. Instead, Durham suggests three quick steps: declutter, identify and declutter again. On the first go-round, get rid of obvious junk, then assess what you have. You may unearth 15 pairs of black pants, but only 10 fit—and you really need just five, she says. Declutter again (give away those extra pants to Goodwill), then see what's left to store and what containers you need to buy, if any. "Most of the time, you'll free up existing bins as you toss stuff," says Durham. "Plus, once you declutter, you'll have less to store."

**Want more? Go to [womansday.com](http://womansday.com) and click on this web icon.**

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