



# Neat Freak News

Bimonthly organizational tips for home, work and life.

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NEAT FREAK NEWS: April 2006

If you're like most Americans, you just filed your income taxes for 2005 and you're now faced with endless stacks of receipts, forms, financial reports, and a fair share of paper you're not even sure you need to keep. Add this to the existing bills, magazines, credit card offers, and school or work papers that cover your desktop and before you know it... you've got paper coming out the wazoo!

Even when I'm at my neat-freakiest, I'm amazed at the amount of paper streaming into our house everyday. Here are a few tips to help you dig your way out and stay on top of the growing mountain of paper in your home or office.

## **\*\*HORIZONTAL IS A NO-NO!\*\***

To the best of your ability, avoid placing paper in a horizontal position. A small pile can quickly become an avalanche when you stack paper. Not to mention the time wasted searching through that pile to find the one scrap of paper with the information you need.

Utilize tools such as a vertical mail sorter, 3-ring binders, or magazine sorters to store paper so it can easily be organized, categorized and viewed in an upright position. Create a filing system that is simple and functional for paper that needs to be kept for longer than a month. Establish a time of year to clean out your filing system (right after tax time is ideal!) so you only keep paper that is current and necessary. For tips on what to keep and what to pitch, check out professional organizer [Julie Morgenstern's ABCs of Important Papers](#) on Oprah.com.

## **\*\*CREATE AN EXIT STRATEGY\*\***

Every organizer will tell you to stand over the recycling bin while opening your mail and immediately pitch what you don't need. Although this is a great way to reduce the amount of paper you live with, you still have to do it every day. Take a few extra minutes right now to reduce the amount of junk that comes into your mailbox in the first place.

\*First, when you receive catalogs that you know you're never going to order from (regardless of the cute contents), call the company and request to be removed from their mailing list.

\*Same goes for magazines. If you don't have time to read all of the magazines you receive, call the publisher and have them send the remainder of your subscription to a local hospital, Ronald McDonald House or battered women's shelter. You'll feel good

about your donation and you won't feel guilty when you walk by that stack of unread tree pulp.

\*Finally, request that your name (and the names of other members of your household) be removed from mailing lists by calling 888.567.8688 for the National Opt-Out Center for direct mailing (\*\*hint: you DO NOT need to enter your Social Security number when prompted to have your name removed).

### **\*\*GIVE IT A HOME\*\***

Once you've broken the horizontal habit and reduced the paper around you, find a permanent location for the categories of paper you need to keep. For example, all bills that require action should be in one location (preferably near your stamps and your checkbook). Financial paperwork should have a file or 3-ring notebook to call home. Take out menus and coupons can share a notebook or folder by the phone. School and work papers can be kept in a wall mounted magazine sorter with a special spot for each member of your family.

Fortunately, tax time only rolls around once a year. Spend a few hours now establishing or maintaining your paper management system and you'll save countless hours in the future. Going forward, you'll only need to spend 5 to 10 minutes every day categorizing, filing, and pitching and you'll be well on your way to a peaceful coexistence with the paper in your life!

### **FREAKIE FREEBIES**

Do you have recipes coming out the wazoo, too? If you love to clip favorite recipes but can never seem to find the instructions for that culinary masterpiece when you need it, take a rainy Saturday and create your own personal cookbook of favorites. No need to recopy the recipes. Just trim up the pages, categorize them into appetizers, entrees, side dishes, etc., and slip them into magnetic pages of an inexpensive photo album. You can easily add more pages as you accumulate more recipes. You might even create a few special pages that contain all of the makings for the perfect dinner party, brunch or barbecue. Bon appetit!