

As seen in the “Ask the Organizing Expert” Column in the Lake Oswego Review and the West Linn Tidings

## If Organizing is So Easy, Why is it So Hard?

**Question: Every year I read articles about “easy organizing” tricks, but they never work for me. If organizing is so easy, why is it so hard?**

It's true – organizing is hard. If it weren't, then we'd all be organized. But just like losing weight and climbing out of debt are rarely accomplished in “three simple steps,” getting organized isn't just plastic bins and a good label maker. However, it's not rocket science either, and *anyone* can be organized!

So back to the question – why is it so hard? Probably because, like all things worth attaining, it takes work. And skill. And time. And what seems easy to some is darn near impossible to others.

Case in point – **Getting Started** can be an enormous hurdle. The premise is simple enough – pick a project and jump in! But what if you're plagued by one of the following scenarios:

### 1. I Don't Know *Where* to Start

**Why it's Hard:** Finding the right place to start can stop an organizing project in its tracks. Should I start with the hardest project, like my files; the easiest, like a junk drawer; the most beneficial, like the kitchen; or the most fun, like photographs? What if I need to organize one room before another?

**Keeping it Easy:** Start with something really simple that you'll enjoy every day. You're already stuck, and anticipating something big and complicated won't motivate you into action. Pick a doable project, like a silverware drawer, a tabletop or even a bookshelf, and organize it to the tee. Revel in it. The success and satisfaction will generate momentum toward your next project. No need to over think it – just start somewhere, anywhere!

### 2. I Don't Know *How* to Start

**Why it's Hard:** I walk into a room and instantly feel overwhelmed. I spin in circles. I pick things up and put them down. Should I clean before I organize, or is it the reverse? Do I have to pull everything out of the room and start from scratch?

**Keeping it Easy:** Start with the clutter you can *see* – those things sitting on countertops or lying on the floor – rather than the mess hidden in closets or drawers. This will restore some visual order to the room, which in turn will reduce your overwhelm. Don't worry about organizing it the “right” way – progress is more important than process, especially if getting started is getting in your way.

### 3. I Don't Know *When* to Start

**Why it's Hard:** I'm going to get organized for my New Year's Resolution...at tax time...over summer break...when I get some free time. It's hard to find a perfect time to get organized.

**Keeping it Easy:** Do something *today*, even if it's just opening the mail or recycling a pile of old magazines. Projects will grow bigger and more daunting the longer you wait. Small steps, taken daily, lead to big results. The "right time" will never come, so seize the day and take action. Is there a better way to get started? Probably. Ideally we'd have a plan, a vision, supplies and ample time. But when procrastination and perfectionism get in the way of simply starting, then your number one goal is momentum – and nothing beats inertia like taking that first step. If getting started is your challenge – then do something, anything – it's always better than doing nothing.

Is organizing hard for you? Send me your struggles! Is it getting rid of things? Sticking with a plan? Managing paper? I'll share my "good enough" solutions to your hardest questions. And for the record: in many situations, plastic bins and a good label maker really do help!

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