

<b>Organizing 101: Just the Basics</b>	<b>Vali G. Heist, Author and Certified Professional Organizer®</b>
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It has been ten years this month since I began writing a column on organizing for the Reading Eagle and ten years since I started my professional organizing business. I have sincerely enjoyed writing about organizing, uncluttering, and simplifying your life. That said, December's column will be my last so that I can keep up with my clients' needs and pursue other writing endeavors such as podcasts, blogs and possibly another book. This month's column will cover the basics of organizing and next month I'll discuss the bigger picture when it comes to organizing and the world we live in. Let's break down organizing basics:

**Step #1.** Home Assessment-Evaluate and write down answers to these questions so you can stay focused as you proceed.

- Why do you want to get organized and what do you want to achieve?
- What are your challenges with your spaces?
- What are your goals and your timeline?
- What are you willing to do or not do to make this happen?



**Step #2.** Unclutter Your Home-Before you organize your spaces, you need to sort your belongings and let go of the CRAP (Clutter that Robs Anyone of Pleasure).

When you are sorting a lot of clutter in one area, follow a few guidelines:

- a. Stay focused and sort first; try not to struggle or read everything.
- b. Start on the left and move toward the right; stick with one area at a time.
- c. Sort things into categories: Keep, Throw/Recycle, Sell, Donate/Give Away, Repair/Upcycle, Other Room
- d. If you're not sure, put it in the 'Keep' pile and move on quickly.
- e. Try to have fun!

Letting go of the CRAP or purging the 'keep' pile. Keeping your goals in mind, go through your items one by one and ask yourself if this item(s) is part of your life going forward. Some things will be harder to let go of than others. Assign an objective 'body double' to help with decisions. Here's a list of what could be clutter:

- Hasn't been used for 2 years
- Items you don't like or need
- Ongoing projects that are unfinished (for at least 2 years)
- Supplies/books from projects that no longer interest you
- Memorabilia that has no value or meaning now or for your future
- Things that have negative connotations or have bad memories
- Clothes that make you feel bad about yourself
- Family heirlooms or collections packed away or stored in the attic

**Step #3.** Location, Location, Location-Everything needs a home or it ends up as clutter. Keep most-used items front and center. Ask yourself:

- a. Who will use the item?
- b. Where would it make sense to keep the item?
- c. Where would you go to find it if you were looking for it?

**Step #4.** Containerize and Corral-The key is choosing the right container to hold your item(s) and making sure it's easily accessible to all users:

- Opaque or solid? Solids hide items and opaque allows you to see what's inside.
- Lid or basket? Lids keep things dust free and no lid means easier clean-up.
- Pretty or utilitarian? Use things you already own to hold items; e.g. antiques, etc.

**Step #5.** Maintenance-Taking a little time each week to maintain organization is critical. When life changes and it will, don't be afraid to rework the system. Feel free to go on my website at [www.thecluttercrew.com](http://www.thecluttercrew.com) for tips on how to maintain your spaces and stay clutter-free!

Clutter Quote: "Don't agonize. Organize." Florynce Kennedy, American lawyer, civil rights activist, and feminist