



Paper Management at Home

Simplify the management of paper in your home by using the 'Five times Three' method: Five steps in three categories. Change the system as your life changes; paper management is an on-going, fluid process. Here's how to break it down:

Five Incoming "Documents"

Most paper comes into the home in one of five ways:

1. Mail: All snail mail including bills, junk mail, magazines, catalogs and newspapers.
2. Computer Mail: Printed out from the Internet or email.
3. Voice Mail or Messages: Handwritten messages from phone or others.
4. Your Paper: Your own paper for home projects, ideas, and hobbies.
5. Other Paper: Photos, memories, office work, art projects.

The Five Decisions

Narrow down your decisions by making one of five choices:

1. Discard: 1st step to staying organized. Get tough! Trust your judgment. Ask yourself: "Do I really have time to read this, time to take care of this, or time to waste on this? If I had all week, would I choose to do/read this?" The trash can is your friend.
2. Do it Now: 2nd step to staying organized: *If it takes 60 seconds or less, do it now!* Glance over items quickly, don't wait. Delayed decisions end up as clutter.
3. Pass the Buck: Have a home to place mail for other people; place gift cards and coupons in your car or purse. Can someone else take care of this? Delegate when you can!
4. To Be Filed: Have a home for paper that needs to be filed. Only keep if needed for taxes or future retrieval and keep filing system SIMPLE. Use available on-line resources instead of keeping paper.
5. Follow-up Needed: Anything that takes longer than 60 seconds to complete (see below).

Five Follow-Up Categories

Follow-up documents generally fall into five categories:

1. Bills: Place bills in one place where you pay the bills. Pay bi-weekly or set up auto-pay and go paperless.
2. Papers to examine/sign/make phone calls: Place these "longer than 60 seconds" projects in one place that is visible, so you take care of them. Review frequently.
3. Reading Material: Place newspapers, catalog, and magazines by your reading spot. Make it portable so you can grab it when you are on the go. Discard old catalogs/magazines; replace with newest in alphabetical order.
4. Memories: Have a temporary home to store all artwork, school papers, photos, and memories. Once a year, go through and decide what is kept long-term. Are you keeping memories because you'll view them later or you think others will?
5. Your own categories: For projects that require paperwork to be kept for later reference, have a home in your filing system. Don't let this paper lay around.

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