



The Get Yourself Organized Project

THE LIFE ORGANIZATION FILE

If you're anything like me, you have a million "notes to self," and every once in a while a little piece of paper can get lost in your shuffle. I have found a very simple system that can help even the most hopelessly unorganized person amaze her friends and family with clever holiday ideas and on-time birthday greetings (as well as getting the bills paid on time). Here are the items you'll need, most of which you probably have on hand:

- one file box
- twelve hanging files with tabs
- thirty-one file folders
- one permanent marker
- sticky notes
- your home calendar
- your home address book
- a book of stamps

Putting your Life Organization File Together

1. On each of the tabs of the twelve hanging files write one of the months of the year (January–December) and on each of the file folders, the days of the month (1–31).

2. Put all the month files in the back of your file box, and the 1–31 folders in the front.

Using your Life Organization File

Once your file is put together, the hardest part is over. Now all you have to do is use it.

For Everyday Life

1. Set aside some time at the beginning of your week to file the paperwork that needs it. I do paperwork on Mondays, so any bills, information the kids bring home from



The Get Yourself Organized Project

THE LIFE ORGANIZATION FILE PAGE 2

school, sales flyers, coupons, etc. that show up the week before go into the coming Monday's file folder. Say that Monday is the 14. I have a sticky note that I put on folder 14 to remind me that's where I'll put all the papers I will be filing on that day.

2. Monday the 14 I go through all those papers, work on them or file them, and then move the sticky note to folder 21—the next Monday when I will be doing paperwork. Here are some examples of things I do with those little slips of paper:

- Make a list of errands
- See what sales are coming up
- Note bills that need to be paid (or filed for later)
- Jot down things I need to put on the calendar

I check to see if I can (or must) take care of any of these items immediately. When I open my mail, I always do it with my recycle basket, calendar, and Life Organization File (LOF) right next to me. Dates get entered on the calendar, papers are recycled, and forms, bills, and important paperwork are dropped into the LOF.

So, say you have a pile of papers just sitting on your desk. Here is how I would go through that pile with my LOF:

- Bills—Put these in the coming Monday's file.
- Invitation to a party two months away on October 10—Put that in the October file. When you get to October, you will put everything in that file into the numbered file folders.
- Sales flyers—Put those in next Monday's file so you can create your shopping list based on what's on sale.



The Get Yourself Organized Project

THE LIFE ORGANIZATION FILE PAGE 3

Some Additional Tips

- You know how you come across a great recipe for Christmas cookies on January 15? Clip out that recipe and drop it in your December file. It will be waiting for you next holiday season.
- Find the perfect Maxine card for your sister, but her birthday is still months away? Buy it now (saving you an emergency trip to the store) and place it in her birthday month's file.
- See a great article on the Internet on flowerpot painting and want to try it out when you visit your mom in May? Just drop it in the May file, and you'll remember to take it with you.
- Once a year I go on a greeting-card buying spree. I buy cards that are just right for the people in my life, and some general ones to have on hand. The Current catalog is a great resource for general cards. When I get the cards home, I address them and stamp the envelopes, but do not sign them until I'm ready to mail them. I want my greetings to be fresh and interesting.
- This filing system also makes a great gift for an older family member who likes to send cards. Show them your file first to see if it's something they would use. Some of my relatives in their nineties have better memories than I do and have no need for a file system!
- When I look through a catalog and see a gift idea, I rip it out and put it in the appropriate file. Even if I don't end up purchasing that exact item, it's nice to have ideas.
- The files are a great place to store directions to events such as weddings and parties. You can even keep tickets to future events in the appropriate month's file (instead of having them hang out on the fridge for four months).

I also have a selection of thank-you notes, thinking-of-you cards, and a few sympathy cards on hand for last-minute needs.

**FOR MORE GREAT IDEAS AND RESOURCES ON GETTING
YOUR HOME AND LIFE ORGANIZED,
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