Katy Home Organizer's

SUMMER SPRINT

Kitchen • Pantry

Welcome to Organizing @ Home eCourse.

I am so excited you are here!
It is truly my honor to help you get your home organized. After working with hundreds of people in their homes, I know that getting overwhelmed stops all progress. I am proud to bring you a simple solution to your clutter presented in a format designed to keep momentum, so you can keep making progress.

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organizing@home

the basics

organizing@home | the basics

In this section, I will cover the basics of the eCourse:
– How to get the most out of it
– What to expect along the way
– What you can expect from me
– How Long WIll it Take
– Video Chat information

how to get the most out of it?

1. Be Ready to Make Decisions
Getting your home ready organized will require making decisions and using a systematic approach makes doing so a lot easier. Our goal is to get your home organized without making more work for yourself later. Cramming things into closets and under beds will not be part of this program, so get ready to make decisions!

2. Take Before Photos
You might shudder at the thought, but you will thank me when you have a before and after as proof of the work you accomplished – even if it is just to yourself. Who knows, you might even send it to a friend, sister or your mother.
It's OK to brag a little – you will have earned it!

3. Schedule Time to Do the Work
You made the decision to get organized, and that will require your time, and focused time at that. Be sure to set aside a minimum of 2 hours for each segment of the course. The actual time spent will depend on your home and situation, but NOTHING will get done if you do not plan for it. Put it on your calendar!

I can't emphasize these 3 things enough. Make it a priority and make time for it!

what to expect along the way

Set realistic expectations

Depending on how much time you have and your specific circumstances, you may or may not get your home perfectly organized in the estimated time, so it's important to set realistic expectations.
This course will focus on the main spaces most people want organized:
– the entry / hallway
– living room / den
– kitchen
– master closet
Additionally, you'll get information on what organizing supplies are helpful in all these areas, when and how to use them, and where to find them. I offer an estimate on how long it might take you to get the space organized so you can plan accordingly. I also include simple steps to tame your paper dragon in a short ebook on paper management.

You may be able to complete the tasks in the time allotted or you might find it didn't make a dent. Each person comes with a unique set of circumstances. What's important is to make a commitment to yourself to do it and back that up with actions. Scheduling your work times will support this commitment.

what you can expect from me

Remember I said to be ready to make decisions? This is where I help you the most.
I will ask a lot of questions – I call them Reflective Questions – to help you make decisions that are right for you. Taking the time to answer the questions are the key to making real progress. You will be asked to journal as a way to see clearly what the problems are and how best to solve them.

Many of the questions are room specific but you will start to recognize a certain line of questioning and (hopefully) be able to elaborate the questions as needed, or apply them into other areas of the home.

Some of my tips and advice are general enough to apply to various situations because I wanted to keep it simple. Follow my tips and advice as much as you can and you *will* have a more organized home!

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how long will it take?

Plan to spend a *minimum of 2 hours* each day, and as much as 4 hours for some of the bigger areas. Longer if you have a larger space and/or more stuff. Each area has a "How long will it take?" section to give you a point of reference for how long it might take to complete the space but in the end it will totally depend on:
– how much stuff you have
– how much time you have available to organize
– physical stamina, decisiveness, and ability to stay on task
– any "undoing" that takes place in between work sessions
Hey, this is the reality of it! It's better to know this and prepare for it than to go in blind and get overwhelmed.

your assignment

– Find a notebook for journaling.
– Join the private Facebook Group
– Download the ZOOM app
– Put the ZOOM video chat dates in your calendar

ask Questions!

If your situation just isn't working out and you can't figure out why, ask us. You can contact us through the Facebook Group page or the Katy Home Organizer Facebook page. We'll be happy to help.

C3 video chats

By signing up for the SUMMER SPRINT you have access to the Clutter to Clarity Club [C3]. They are Real-Time LIVE Video chats during which you can ask me for suggestions and advice about your most bothersome areas. THESE ARE NOT PRE-RECORDED THEY ARE LIVE! Join me via smartphone or computer for your chance to get that special attention you need while learning from others as well.

And if you need me to see your space, I can! That's what I love about ZOOM. I can asses and evaluate your situation in real time.

If you have any questions, comments or thoughts, reach out in the Facebook group AND
BE SURE TO JOIN US on our daily ZOOM video calls – check Facebook group for times, or for daily reminders and inspiration text **SPARKLY** to 57711. Summer Sprint ends July 27th.

ZOOM → https://zoom.us/j/9775243413
FACEBOOK GROUP → www.facebook.com/groups/simpleorganizing

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the process

organizing@home | the process

today's focus:

– Before you begin each day
– The systematic approach
– After we Sort & Purge, then what?
– Homework

Throughout the eCourse you will notice a repeating pattern – a systematic approach – that works no matter what area you are working in. Soon you will begin to anticipate the next step in the process.

before you begin working

1) Eat something – you will need to sustain your energy for several hours.
2) Put on your favorite music.
3) Have trash bags and a box or two (or five depending on the space).

Something you will never regret doing before starting any job is to ask your higher power for help and guidance. Just that little request to the Universe* to assist makes a big difference in how quickly solutions arise. I urge you to try it, and then trust it to be so. The Universe always has your back, you just have to invite it in.

the systematic approach

The systematic approach can be broken into 4 parts:
1) Assess & Reflect,
2) Sort & Purge,
3) Organize, and
4) Maintenance

If you get lost in the process, think about what stage you are on. Have you finished sorting, purging and categorizing? Then you probably aren't quite ready to organize. Have you thought through the reflective questions? Then you might not be finished purging. Has it been a few weeks since you organized? You might be ready for some maintenance.

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assess & reflect

No matter what space you are dealing with you are going to start with an Assessment. Assessment is an analytical view of what is going on in the space while remaining objective – be sure to stick to the facts!

Often, clients will just gloss over everything because it can be too visually overwhelming. It's important to step back and look at everything objectively.
– See things for the objects they are, not for what emotions they cause you.
– Be careful to be analytical and not critical. There is no room for judgment in this process. There isn't time for that. If you want to make meaningful progress, remain as detached as possible from whatever negative emotions you may be experiencing. Stay positive and remain objective to stay on task.

sort & purge

You're going to decide the fate of every item in each space. When people ask us where to start, we usually say:
– search for all the trash (and thus revealing all the non-trash)
– remove all the items that do not belong in the room or area (purge)

It's not important where you start, just that you start. Pick a place an go!
Anything that belongs in that room or area can be left in place (or put in a pile/box/table). Focus on things that are leaving and get it out of your way so that all that remains is what you actually want there.

As you make decisions, you will put items into basically two categories: **Keep** and **Go Away**.

As you go through each item to determine its fate, your **Keep** categories will be wide and varied. Some items will get added to similar piles of that item, other things will be the start of a new category altogether. It's common for me to start using one sized box to group items and then have to upgrade because I ran out of room, or vice-versa.

KEEP

The **Keep** category breaks down into these two sub-categories:

Keep / IN – When working with clients, I suggest limiting what stays in the a room or space to things that actually BELONG in there. Assign each space a job and, as much as possible, stick with it. That means nothing unrelated to that space. The exception would be if there is nowhere else for it to be stored and you must keep it there.
The Keep | IN category means you will KEEP it, and it lives in the room or space you're working in.

Keep / OUT – These are things that you must keep, but do not align with the purpose of the room or space. You do not need to know exactly where they will go right now, just that they will not live in the space you are working in. For today, simply put them in a box labeled **Keep / OUT** and continue on with the task at hand.

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GO AWAY

Keep / IN =	this room
Keep / OUT =	other room
Go AWAY =	sell /donate /give
Go TRASH =	trash /recycle

GO / AWAY – This category are items that you no longer want but have life left in them and someone else can use them.

Sell: You may decide to sell them at a garage sale, online or at a consignment shop. When selling online, if it takes more than 2 or 3 minutes for you to post in an online garage sale site, save them all until the end of your scheduled work session. You don't want to lose momentum by continually fiddling with your phone.

Donate: When it comes to donations, my rule of thumb is, if it isn't something that you think people would pay money for in a store, then it's probably better off either in a garage sale or in the trash. It must be in sellable condition, or the donation center will throw it out. It can't be broken or be missing parts.

[**Garage Sale**: Garage sale items can be things that still have a little life left, but may not necessarily make the cut at a donation center. Many of my clients don't want to bother with a garage sale, and I understand, it can be a lot of work but it can totally pay off. It goes without saying, but I'll say it anyway, if you are going to have a garage sale, hang onto all the items that were worthy of donating or giving away! Donate and give away after the garage sale.]

Give: You have a specific person in mind already to give it to. In these instances, I suggest you snap a quick photo with your phone and text it to that person on the spot. Just say, *"Hey there! I am organizing my room and getting rid of things I no longer need. Are you interested in this ____?"* It's important you let them know you are working on an organizing project. Stating this will give them a greater sense of urgency in responding, and know it's not time to chit chat (hopefully). They may not reply on the spot, but the underlying expectation would be that you aren't hanging on to it since you are cleaning out the room. Regardless of who it is going to, be sure to give them a deadline for pick up.

GO / TRASH – These are items that can no longer be used or would not sell even at a garage sale. Many items can and should be recycled.

tips for a productive work session

– Schedule time to do the work and stick with it (put it on your calendar)
– Set a timer to go off every 15 -20 minutes to A)mark the passing of time and B)helps to keep you accountable for your time. If you got stuck reminscing the alarm will pull you out of it and remind you to get back on course.
– Stay in the room you are working on until the everything has been sorted and purged OR until the timer goes off. Your time will be whittled away by "putting this away real quick". Stay put and use the box system.
– For best results, set aside a minimum of 2 hours at a time.
– Make quick decisions

then what?

The process of organizing isn't cut and dry, the steps are fluid and overlap, so know that your exact flow might be a little different than what I say here, but it's normal. You might wait until you are completely done organizing the entire room before delivering the **Keep** /**Away** items, in fact I recommend it! However there is no *perfect* way.

When you are finished sorting and purging, it is sometimes necessary to deliver any **Keep**/**Away** items simply because the space it is occupying. When you deliver the items to their destination, don't fall into the trap of having to put them away. If they are easy to put away do it, but if not simply set the items in there and deal with them later. It's important not to get side tracked on another project, but to finish the project you are on. Conserve your energy and stay focused.

then organize!

It's true the process of "organizing" is fluid and a lot of times sorting and purging evolves into organizing without even realizing it. If you haven't started organizing, then it's time to get going. Organizing and what supplies are useful will be covered later.

When you are finished completely, or for the day and you can get donations out of the house right away, do it. Drop it by your favorite charity on your way to the grocery store. If it's for a friend, make a delivery or make plans to meet for coffee and bring it them. Follow through is important here and there's no time like the present. Your project will feel "complete" when this task is completed.

your assignment

Nearly each lesson I will assign "homework". Complete any included worksheets or writing assignments as suggested. Clearing your mind by journaling helps bring focus and clarity to the situation and the worksheets are to help keep you on task.

Action Steps:
– Gather boxes, trash bags and other receptacles to prepare for your first work session so you are prepared and less likely to leave the room

Organizing is more than just moving stuff around to make it look neat, it's about making decisions and taking action!

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organizing supplies

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today's focus:

– Resourcefulness
– Repurposing
– In-Store Purchases
– Pinspiration

Several of us at Katy Home Organizer have been or still are stay-at-home moms. For many SAHMs that means one income and limits on spending but to get organized you need organizing supplies, they are essential! So when I was a young SAHM I learned to make use of what was around me, and I shopped garage sales too.

resourcefulness

With the multitude of organizing supplies available in stores and online, it's easy for the task to quickly become overwhelming and expensive. Thinking as a professional Organizer reduces the possibility of overbuying and increases your resourcefulness. A simple shift in the way you look at the everyday objects in your home can turn unused items into helpful tools.

Empty Boxes

Why do Organizers love boxes? Because when organizing, *containing* items is important.

When I look at a space to organize, I think "how can I compartmentalize and/or contain these items?" One of the first things I notice is whether there is adequate use of boxes, bins, or drawer dividers.

What kinds of empty box makes for good organizing supplies? Here are some everyday boxes found in all households to consider:

- Tissue boxes: Cut the top off a long box to use in a dresser to hold folded socks or scarves, use square ones as a little trash can on a desk or vanity, and they're also handy in or on a desk to collect receipts.
- Cereal boxes: Cut at an angle like a magazine holder to store notepads, folders, etc., in an office, or cut to be a shallow tray to hold pens, pencils, scissors, etc.
- Snack boxes: When cut down they work well a in desk drawer.
- Nearly any box: Checkbook boxes, cell phone boxes, jewelry gift boxes, business card boxes, shoe boxes in

various sizes meet all kinds of needs. Just imagine the box with all the ends sealed up, look at it from all angles, and think about how it will fit into different spaces or hold different items.

re-purposing

What else do you have around the house that is under-utilized? Plastic shoe-sized boxes are my favorite go-to item. Do you have any that are just holding a random assortment of non-essential items? Could the contents be purged and the box re-purposed?

Baskets

Baskets aren't just for decorations, they can be functional as well. Though they aren't the best solution for all situations, view them as containers to hold a particular type of item or category of items.

This one holds the dog collar, leash, and pet meds. When it's time to walk the dog, this client has no trouble remembering remember the leash is in the basket.

Bookshelves

Most people only think to use these for books, but they are highly versatile. I have used them to hold towels and washcloths when no linen closet was available, and in closets to hold shoes, purses, or clothing.

Do you have any under-utilized bookshelves in your home that can be re-purposed?

store purchases

Where an Organizer shops depends on the specific supplies needed for a project. At Katy Home Organizer, I have my trusted products I turn to again and again, which most often are found at the Container Store or Target.

I suggest to first use whatever you have on hand, but if you must buy, choose clear storage whenever possible so that the contents are clearly visible. It's important to see what you have.

Here is where you can find the best prices for certain go-to items:

Clear is Better!

As an organizer I know clear is better. If you are one of those "out of sight – out of mind" kind of people, clear is preferred. But clear doesn't have to be ugly. Clear can be calming. It may not be cute and that's OK. Sometimes cute can be a distraction, it can obscure, and it can be inefficient.

my favorites

This next section are my tried and true containers that I use over and over and over and over. Most can be found locally, either at the Container Store or Target and for these containers only, I'm including dimensions to help you plan.

For all of the containers I share my opinion about them, what I like and don't like to help you make an educated choice or re-think about things you might already own. No dimensions are included because there are so many similar styles to choose from.

The first items are from the Container Store. *I love* ❤ the Container Store and for the record I do not make ANY money by endorsing the Container Store! I just really trust and believe this product. Most people think the Container Store has expensive products, but these boxes are competitively priced and are of superior quality.

the Our Clear Storage Boxes™

What I like about them:

- They have the most vertical sides I've found. These are the most rectangular and sturdiest small to mid-sized clear containers you will find, and I've looked! Cheap clear boxes at the dollar store are fine if you've got them, but once you try these, you'll never go back. The vertical sides and minimal lip use space efficiently.
- They are super clear! SO easy to see through.
- Several sized boxes available that seem to be just the right size again and again.

XS - Accessory Box™ 6 ½ x 7½ x 3 5/8
S - Our Shoe Box™ 7 ½ x 13 x 4 ¼
M - Mens' Shoe Box™ 10 1/8 x 14 ¾ x 5 5/8
TALL - Our Tall Shoe Box™ 7 ½ x 13 x 8 ¼
L - Sweater Box™ 13 1/8 x 15 5/8 x 6 ¾
XL - Deep Sweater Box™ 13 1/8 x 15 5/8 x 13 ¼

What I don't like:

- Nothing, they are perfect for nearly everything!

There are a few Dollar Store finds I have used, but they are flimsy, and because the labels are hard to remove it's hard to see through the plastic, plus they are not always available. HOWEVER, there are times when their functionality wins me over! Like when I really need it to fit in a standard size upper cabinet.

Sterilite Purple Latch

My next favorite containers are made by Sterilite, and I buy them at my local Target. If you don't have a Target around, you can order them online.

What I like about them:
• Nice vertical sides and angular corners with little wasted space around the latches
• sturdy clear latching lids stay on
• good for indoor or garage storage

What I don't like:
• Nothing, they are perfect for 98% of household needs

Organizers Note:
When deciding between the Sterilite 27qt and the Container Store XL box, I prefer the XL box.
Why?
The XL box is much clearer, I like the shape better and it's not as bulky. However, when contents are heavier, I need a sturdier box, or require a lid that locks down, I'll use the 27qt.

Honorable Mention:
The Hefty Storage Bin is an honorable mention. Available at Target and Lowes, I love the latching lids. Because I sometimes have a hard time finding the Sterilite 27qt. purple latch, and I LOVE that size, I will buy the Hefty 32qt gray latch.

27qt = 12.75 " H x 11.12 " W x 17.0 " L
66qt= 13 1/4 " H x 16 3/8 " W x 23 5/8" L
32qt= 6 1/2" H x 16 3/8" W x 23 5/8" L
Hefty =14 1/2 " H x 16 7/8 " W x 12.0 " L

27qt

66qt

32qt

Hefty Storage Bin

32qt

bookshelves

When extra storage was needed I've added simple bookshelves in many client closets, and I have a few from IKEA in my own closets. It always makes me chuckle when I suggest a bookshelf to someone as a solution and they light up like it's the most brilliant idea ever. Many of the best ideas are the simplest.

Here are a few different shelving units from Target and IKEA that I have bought for a variety of jobs.

TARGET website photos shown

TARGET Room Essentials Brand Tall & Short Bookcases

What I like:
- Cheap, easy to put together, and readily available at any Target.
- Shelves are adjustable.

What I don't like:
- It's cheap, but what do you expect for a $20-$30 price point? Although totally functional for an adult, I would not put this in a kids space. It's just not as sturdy as I'd like for use in a kids space.
- I generally only nestle these in closets because I feel they less likely to tip over when tucked into a tight space. These are not the strongest, but they are an affordable solution if function is your only concern.

TARGET 6 or 8 cube storage

What I like:
- Again, easily available at any Target, as are the Closetmaid Brand found at Lowes and Home Depot.
- Low price point ($35-$50).

What I don't like:
- Finding storage bins that fit that are clear is a challenge. If clients already have them, I will utilize the collapsible canvas bins sold along side the cube storage. Occasionally I can find a clear box at Target that works, but it's hit and miss. When I find a consistent solution, I will add it to this page.

IKEA website photos shown

IKEA KALLAX bookcase

What I like:
- 15" cube storage space
- The cubes are the perfect size for the Container Stores' Our Clear Storage Sweater Box and Deep Sweater Box!
- Position horizontally or vertically
- Sturdy
- Optional drawers or cabinet fronts available.

What I don't like:
- Nothing, I love them!

IKEA Billy Bookcase Short and Tall

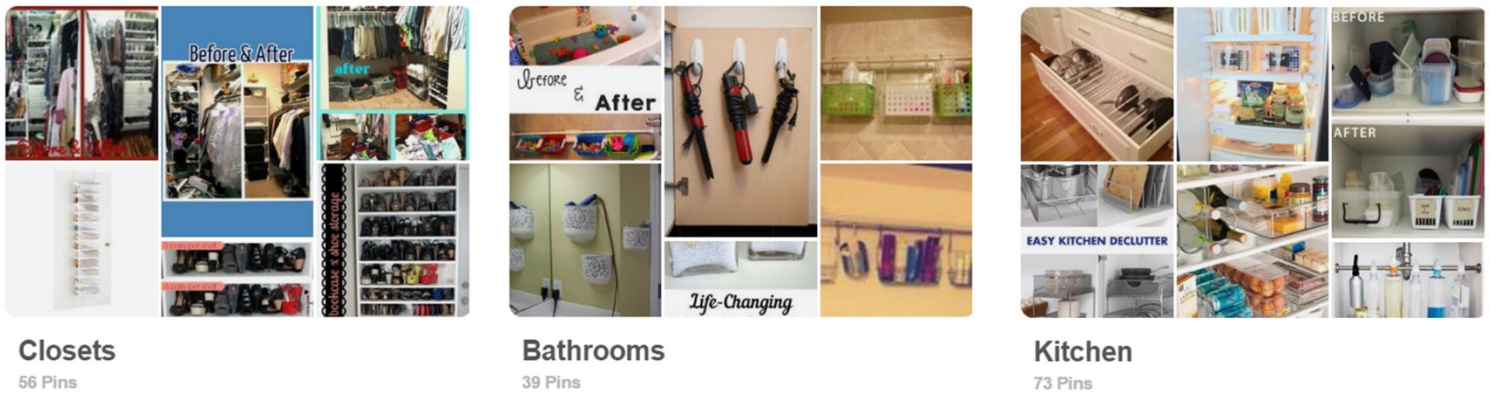
What I Like:
- Easy to put together
- Sturdy – IKEA is pretty reliable if you put it together correctly. Everything I've ever bought has lasted many year and through several moves.
- The shelves in a Billy are 11" deep, 1.6" deeper than the Target bookshelf.
- Shelves are adjustable.

What I don't like:
- Nothing! It is a predictable and reliable purchase. If only IKEA wasn't a mad house to shop in!*

IKEA website photos shown

pinspiration

Pinterest makes it easy to find ideas for organizing every nook and cranny in your house. In fact, there's so much creativity and inspiration on Pinterest, I set a timer so I don't get lost for hours! Check out solutions for the areas of your home you plan to organize, and pick and choose what you like to fit your personal style and budget constraints.Did you know? I have a Pinterest page full of creative organizing solutions? If you haven't already seen it please take a look. But set your timer or you might get lost for a few hours!



What do you like?

I'd love to see what tickles your fancy! Please share your discoveries in our Facebook Group. Having trouble linking a pin to the group page? Click the photo for directions on how to post it from a computer.

Follow this quick guide to post your favorite pin in our Facebook Group.

today's assignment

Go on a hunt throughout your home and use the checklist to track what you have that might be repurposed. Look at things with a new perspective.

– Use the following Checklist to help keep track what you have on hand and what you think you might need.
– Use this worksheet to create your Action Plan.

BE SURE TO JOIN US on our daily ZOOM video calls – check Facebook group for times, or for daily reminders and inspiration text **SPARKLY** to 57711. Summer Sprint ends July 27th.

ZOOM → https://zoom.us/j/9775243413

FACEBOOK GROUP → www.facebook.com/groups/simpleorganizing

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worksheets

organizing@home | action plan worksheet

Area: _____

What are my top 3 goals today:

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

What are the steps to accomplishing GOAL #1.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

What are the steps to accomplishing GOAL #2.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

What are the steps to accomplishing GOAL #3.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

What might get in my way today and what actions can I take to avoid them?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What is my big reason WHY? Why am I doing this? What is a big payoff I will experience?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How can I celebrate when I am finished?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Where can I take my donations? _____

Now, go do it! 😉

organizing@home | supply checklist

DIY items on hand (how many)

_____ empty cell phone box _____ empty shoe boxes _____ rectangular or square baskets _____tissue box

_____ other _____

_____ other _____

_____ other _____

Re-purposed items (how many / what kind)

_____ clear containers _____

_____ bookshelf _____

_____ storage bins _____

_____ other _____

_____ other _____

_____ other _____

What do you think you need to buy? (how many / what kind/size)

_____clear containers _____

_____ bookshelf _____

_____ storage bins _____

_____

_____

_____

Kitchen Organizing Supplies

_____Clear containers _____

_____ cabinet shelves _____

_____ lid rack(s) _____

_____ multi-level organizer(s) _____

_____ lazy susan(s) _____

_____ 4 sort divider _____

_____ other _____

_____ other _____

_____ other _____

organizing@home | kitchen strategy

Lower Cabinet Strategy

Spending a few minutes answering these questions will save you frustration later.

Do you think you will be able to get your kitchen cabinets organized in one afternoon (4 – 6 hours)? Y/N

Yes. Great! Do you have 4 -6 hours in a row that you can dedicate to this project? Y/N

Yes. Fabulous! Do you have any supplies pre-purchased ready to utilize? Y/N

Yes. Wonderful. Sounds like you are in an ideal position to get started.

No. Not to worry. You can break it up into more manageable segments starting with Assessment.

Spend time really assessing your Lower Cabinets. Are there empty spaces anywhere? Where will your potential come from if there is no empty space? Right, from purging. But before you start that, analyze what is in there. Poke around and see what you've got. You might be amazed at what you

Re-purposed items (how many / what kind)

_____ clear containers _____

_____ bookshelf _____

_____ storage bins _____

_____ other _____

_____ other _____

_____ other _____

What do you think you need to buy? (how many / what kind/size)

_____clear containers _____

_____ bookshelf _____

_____ storage bins _____

_____

_____

_____

Kitchen Organizing Supplies

_____Clear containers _____

_____ cabinet shelves _____

_____ lid rack(s) _____

_____ multi-level organizer(s) _____

_____ lazy susan(s) _____

_____ 4 sort divider _____

_____ other _____

organizing@home

kitchen supplies

organizing@home | kitchen supplies

today's focus:

Organizing Products
-where to buy them
-why you need (some) of them

The kitchen is the hub of the home. It's not just a place to eat, it's where we visit at the beginning and the end of the day. I don't know about you but we pretty much can't walk far without passing the kitchen. It's on the way to and from this and that room. It's where we go when we walk in the door, whether it be for a drink or just to check if anything new and exciting appeared in the fridge while we were gone. It is a vital part of the home. Because the kitchen is used everyday creating and maintaining organization is important. When the kitchen is disorganized it not only makes cooking a challenge, it tends to drive people away. No one wants to be in a cluttered kitchen let alone cook or eat, but because it is the hub we go in there anyway. Face it, a cluttered kitchen is uncomfortable to be in!!

The kitchen has a lot of moving parts that all connect but can be broken down into more manageable chunks: the pantry, lower cabinets, upper cabinets, drawers and counter tops. Today we will discuss the tools I like to use to organize the kitchen. These aren't the tools I normally use in the rest of the house, which is why I am covering them here in this kitchen segment.

All these products make life much easier in the kitchen because they are simple.

organizing products

Did you know there are organizers made just for the kitchen cabinets? There are a lot of them – and they really make life easier. These 6 products are our go-to favorites time and again because they work!

Cabinet Shelf Available in S, M, L, L w/ an extension, double cabinets shelves, tall cabinet shelves This one I found at the Container Store ($4.99-$9.99). Cabinet shelves are also found at Target, WalMart, and other stores, but not the same quality or variety.

4 Sort divider Available in S, M, L and most of the time we use these to store taller items, as shown, but I've used them for baking pans too. Found at the Container Store ($3.99-$4.99)

Lazy Susans come in a sizes ranging from 9"-18" Available at the Container Store and Amazon, both with good quality and prices. ($5.99-$29.99)I love these baby's!

3- Tier Spice Shelves come in many varieties but this is the style we use most because it is expandable and adjusts to any cabinet size. Found at the Container Store in two sizes – Original ($9.99) and the deeper version Mega ($14.99). Similar shelves are available at Target, Walmart, Lowes, etc. and are of comparable quality but with it's vertical sides and no base lip, this one makes the best use of space.

Drawer Organizers – For drawer organizers, I like the Rubbermaid Interlocking drawer organizers because they work 99% of the time in a multitude of situations. They are 3" high and are available in 6 sizes. Again, the most vertical sides makes the best use of space, as do the pointed corners. I love these too! Found at the Container Store ($2.49-$4.99) and occasionally I've found them at Wal-Mart.

Lid Rack These hold up to 6 lids and makes for streamlined lid storage. Attach them to the cabinet and you're good to go. Found at the Container Store ($6.99)

where to buy them

The CONTAINER STORE has the BEST selection of quality organizing products for the kitchen – hands down!
Here's why we shop there the most:
Quality: for only slightly more or the same price, you are getting a superior product
Consistency: you can almost guarantee to find the same product sold there a few years from now. We can't say that about any other store. That means if you decide you want to add another "what-cha-ma-thing", you'll still be able to find it, and it will match with what you already have.
Variety: you will find the same items in a variety of styles and price points – and it will be there next time you go to find it.

– TARGET has consistency, but not variety. Quality is ok.
– WALMART has some variety, but no consistency. Quality is spotty.
– BED BATH & BEYOND has quality and consistency (most of the time), but not much variety. Sometimes the most expensive choice.
– LOWES has a limited variety, but is consistent and quality for most things is good.
– At Home, Tuesday Morning, Home Goods, Ross all have limited variety and consistency; quality spotty.
– The Dollar Store has limited variety and consistency, quality is bad and is not worth your money.\
– AMAZON – the links I am providing you are for products I have either used, or would try in the future. I know Amazon has a gazillion products and some are ridiculously priced, I won't include those. If I wouldn't buy it, I won't suggest it.

I don't work for the Container Store but I love the Container Store. Honestly, at first I was skeptical of the price, but I once I began to factor in my time, I decided it is worth the slight amount they might charge for a handful of the regular things I buy there. The few dollars I might save looking elsewhere is not enough to compensate for my time.

why you need (some) of them

Like any space, it's better when compartmentalized. Compartmentalizing makes it easier to access what you want but more importantly *maintains order* so that when you are ready to put things away, it's easy too!

Cabinet shelves make use of vertical space and make accessing dishes easier. In this case, you don't have to lift the smaller dishes up to get to the larger dishes. It also leaves more room for the bowls (which needed room!) Yes the Corning ware can stack, but it sure is easier to pull out the one you want when it's stored this way, and of course easier to put it away too.
Target, Walmart, Container Store
$5 - $20 depending on brand.

I love the 4 sort divider, they are awesome for holding up flat items like cutting boards and cookie sheets. If your home wasn't built with one of those skinny cabinets that tall things go in, or a cabinet with the dividers built in, then you need one of these! It's no fun to have the stack fall over when you need the one in the middle. Whether you use them in an upper cabinet or a lower cabinet, these are a huge help.
Container Store $5

Lazy susans make seeing and accessing items easier because if you can't see it, chances are it will be forgotten, and if you can't reach it, you might not use it. One spin and you can reach whatever you need, even on a high shelf if you can only reach the front bottle that's all you need. I like to use them for oils, vinegars, sauces and spices
Target, Walmart, Container Store
$6

Spice racks allow you to see all your spices, especially if you have a lot to store in a small space. These 3-tiered risers are also good for canned goods in the pantry.
Target, Walmart, Container Store
$8 - $12

If you want clarity in your drawers, drawer organizers are a must! No matter what size the drawer, compartmentalizing it makes it function so much better.
Walmart, Target, Container Store
$1 - $7 each depending on brand.

The lid rack is an inexpensive yet very handy product. Don't bother mounting it to your cabinet door, it will be too heavy for it. Instead attach it to the inside of the cabinet using the largest lid as your gauge for placement. Even with your largest lid it still has a low profile allowing you to store other things behind it.
Container Store - $6

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some of them

There are some kitchen organizers that are not worth your money. In general, I avoid the "one use" tools. In theory many are cool inventions, but for the everyday person (or at least the ones I encounter in my line of work) they are more trouble than they are worth. This is where learning to think things through is sooo helpful. You might be wondering what products I think are in this category. Here are a few examples and why.

This gravity feed dispenser is a good idea in theory, but is limited by what fits. If you have a wide variety of cans, seeing and accessing the can you want isn't practical.

This stacking bin in theory makes use of vertical space, but reaching in to grab things from the bottom bin is difficult.

A coffee pod dispenser in theory a good idea, but in many of the homes I've worked in, this gets kicked to the curb. Not by me, but by the client. It was just more trouble than it was worth, especially if you have a variety of flavors and lead a busy life. If you are a meticulous organized person, this is great for you, but not for the rest of the population. A clear bin in the pantry will serve the same function AND later on down the road a clear bin can serve a new purpose if needed. This product serves only one function in the kitchen (and I've tried using it in other ways!).

Before bringing home another "one-use" product, ask yourself:

-Does it make efficient use of space?
-Does it solve a problem that's really a problem? Meaning, is it just cool or do you have a tricky situation that this gizmo solves?
-Is there something that you already own that can do the same thing with the same or better results?
-Does it make life easier? You might have to think about that one a little – think through the reality of what it would be like to own and use it.

Sometimes you just won't know until you buy it and start using it. Over the years I have purchased and tested quite a few products only to take them right back to the store. I was literally doing research to see if the item is worth the time, money, and effort of my clients. Even *thinking it through* I couldn't determine whether it was worth it or not; I had to try it out.

Do you have a neat kitchen organizer that you use? I want to know about it and why you love it! I love hearing the different perspectives of what others enjoy using. Even if it is one of these "rejects" let me know, all that really matters is that YOU love it! Post it on our Facebook page and tell us why you love it!

your assignment

– **Add items to your Checklist** Pull out the checklist you used a few days ago and add any kitchen organizing supplies that might come in handy.
– **Schedule the time to shop** so you have your supplies ready when it's time to organize the kitchen. If you think you need it, here's the Action Plan worksheet. Much time and momentum are lost by having to stop what you are doing to go buy supplies. You can always return what you don't use later!

Tip: when ordering on Amazon, check the return policy if you think you might return it. I made that mistake ONCE. Now I only buy from Amazon *what I know* I will use and the rest at local retailers – even if I need to order it online (like from Target) I can at least return it in the store.

BE SURE TO JOIN US on our daily ZOOM video calls through July 27th, check Facebook group for times, or for daily reminders and inspiration text **SPARKLY** to 57711.

organizing@home

the pantry

organizing@home | the pantry

today's focus:

– Assess
– Reflect & Purge
– Sort & Organize
– How to Organize it
– How Long Will it Take?

Fuel up, say a prayer,
grab a trash bag,
and put on music!

assess

Once again, we return to the assessment, but this is sooo easy. This time you are assessing if your pantry is set up in zones. It may have started out that way once, but when the pantry isn't functioning this is the main reason. How do you know what you have if things aren't grouped together in a logical way?

Most of the time these categories apply and will become your zones

– Cereal/Breakfast
– Bread/Tortillas
– Snacks
– Canned Goods
– Pastas/Grains/Rice
– Condiments/Sauces
– Water/Drinks
– Trash Bags/Reusable Grocery Bags
– Alcohol (booze)
– Paper Products – paper plates, napkins, paper towels
– Wraps/Baggies – snack/ lunch/ quart/ gallon bags, plastic wrap, aluminum foil, wax paper, parchment paper

Items that can apply to more than one category

– Peanut Butter: Is it a canned good? Does it go with breakfast items? Or maybe with snacks or with the bread?
– Bread: Should it go with cereals and breakfast items, or with Grains? Sometimes it comes down to where it will fit the best.
– Paper Products: If there aren't too many, they can be added to the Trash Bags zone.

Items that can go in the pantry or a drawer
– Wraps/Baggies

Items that can go in the pantry or an upper cabinet depending on your set up and habits

– Baking Supplies: Sometimes the pantry just isn't big enough, and if you have room to spare in an upper cabinet, that is agood alternative.
– Spices: Most people store them in an upper cabinet or drawer, but sometimes it becomes necessary to store them in the pantry
– Oils & Vinegars: Either way on a lazy susan is my favorite!

reflect & purge

I think I like *Reflect* & Purge better than *Sort* & Purge! In short, you will look through each item in your pantry and search for what has expired or just isn't used anymore. If it's NOT opened it can be donated. It's time to be decisive – so when you are ready to jump into the activity put on your decision-making hat and channel your inner CEO.

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reflective questions

– Did it expire because it couldn't be found?
– Was there a dietary change that made it obsolete?
– Was it yucky?
– Are there obscure items purchased for a specific meal that will never be used?
—Church Food Drives are year round – Donate it.)
– Is there an overabundance of candy?
—Take it to the office, church or your kids' school.
– Are there a plethora of paper plates and party napkins?
—Give yourself a break from the dishes and use those paper plates. Next time don't buy so many or immediately use the leftovers until gone. Extend the party fun by using the napkins in kids lunches or for everyday use. The reality is that the next time you have a party (especially a themed party) you will want new plates and napkins, so use them up!
– Do you have an over-abundance of canned beans or chips? Bulk shopping isn't the best idea for everything. Saving money is great, but if a pantry is so crammed that you can't find what 's in there; it's costing you elsewhere. (Like your peace of mind)

sort & organize

As you Reflect & Purge you are going to Sort & Organize. It really is almost all one motion and as you make decisions you'll be grouping like items to set up into *zones*.

Create Zones

Set up zones using these general guidelines:

– Items that are frequently used should be stored at eye level.
– Healthy snacks for kids can be at their eye level.
– Items for cooking meals can be at the eye level of the head chef.
– Stack cans like you see them at the store – in rows. Most people have several of the same thing, so stack them in rows of like kind.
– If there are a variety of canned goods that all need to be seen, use a 3-tiered organizer.
– Use the high pantry shelves for things that aren't used all the time. For some it's baking and overstock condiments, for others it's oils & vinegars. Things you don't need (or don't want) to use every day. (Unless you are very tall of course, in which case it's the reverse. Those items go down low.)
– Drinks can be stored on the floor because A) it's usually pretty heavy, B) it's easier to stack on the floor C)shelf space isn't as commonly available.
– Have you ever stood behind a tall person in a photo? It's hard to see over tall things. Make sure taller items are in the back.

Make sure taller items are in the back!

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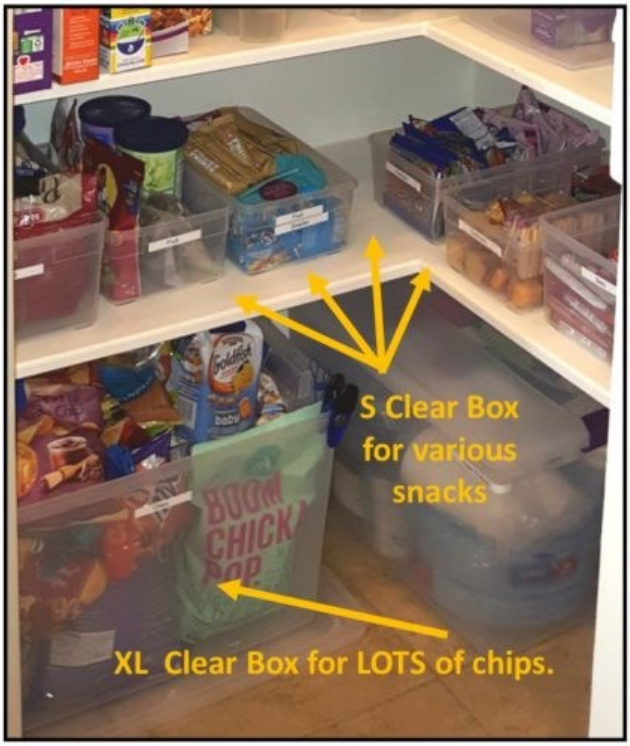
how to organize it?

Now some fun tips to make your pantry more functional and how to use those nifty kitchen organizers we've been talking about.

Clear Boxes Rule!

Clear boxes (without the lids) are very helpful to hold all kinds of things. Small items like snack bars, granola bars, fruit cups, fruit squeezes, juice boxes and more. Larger boxes are useful for bagged chips or packages of cookies, bagged pastas and rice.



S and M Clear Boxes I like to use the S and M clear boxes for snacks and set up a "serve yourself" snack zone. If you don't want to go through the effort of putting your snacks in a clear box, then tear off the top flaps of the box the snacks come in. Why? Two reasons. 1) it makes it easy to just reach in and grab a snack and 2) you can immediately see when they are gone. (No one likes reaching into an empty box for a yummy snack!)

L Clear Boxes A larger clear box is good for storing baking supplies – just grab the whole container and bring it to the counter. They also are good if you normally have a lot of bagged pastas, rice, and beans.

XL Clear Boxes If drawer or shelf spaces are limited, keep plastic wraps together in a XL box. Paper plates, forks, knives, napkins, and cups can be stored in one of these too, or if you have the Costco sizes, a 66qt bin works too.

The Cabinet Shelf In conjunction with clear boxes, cabinet shelves help create "drawers" that are easy to reach into and make it easy to see what's left.

Lazy Susans rock! Use lazy susans on the top shelf or in corners for oils, vinegars, or other condiments to make them easier to find and access.

XS Clear Box This size box is great for dip mixes, sauce mixes and packaged seasonings. Much cheaper than the acrylic containers made for this purpose.

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practice

Get all of your organizing supplies in place and practice interacting with it. Literally stand there for a minute reaching in and out, sliding things over, spining them around or acting as if you are preparing a meal. That's the test, and it's better to test it all out now. Ask yourself:

— Are things easy to see? Adjust as needed. If you can't see it, why? Move things around so you can while taking care not to lock something else out.
— How many steps in the process does it take to get what you want? *Strive for 2 at the most*. More than that it's harder to follow through and things tend to get stuffed in places. Remember, it's the putting things away that is important. Seeing things and be able to easily put them away.

If you want to see more pantries take a look at my before and after photos. I really like to keep it simple in the pantry – it just doesn't need to be complicated. In fact the more complicated the less likely you will be able to keep it going.

how long will it take?

If you stay focused most average-sized pantries can take about 4 hours to complete, start to finish. Be committed to accomplishing your goal today and in no time it will be finished. Drinking that morning coffee, asking for help from your higher power and playing music will give you a boost of energy to drive it to completion!

today's assignment

- Open the pantry and get started!

*** BE PREPARED*** Have at least some supplies BEFORE you begin. Time and momentum are wasted if you must stop in the middle and go shopping.

If you think you need it, prepare with the Action Plan Worksheet.

organizing@home

lower cabinets

organizing@home | lower cabinets

today we will discuss:

– Assess
– Sort & Purge
– Organize
– Supplies
– How Long Will It Take?
– Modifications

Kitchens come in a lot of different sizes and styles. Some are huge with a ton of upper cabinets, some have more lower cabinets, some have a lot of both, some have only a few cabinets. Regardless of all that, the kitchen cabinets I have seen have pretty much the same contents. For the most part, the things normally found in lower cabinets are:
– appliances
– mixing bowls, colanders
– pots and pans, soup pots
– Pyrex dishes
– extra appliances
– cutting boards
– cookie sheets, cupcake tins, cake tins, cooling racks
– pitchers, vases
– Tupperware
– junk!

If you have something in your lower cabinets that I've missed, please be sure to let me know!

Most of the time the problems we typically find in lower cabinets are:
– things not grouped together by like kind
– space inefficiently used (wasted space)
– not utilizing cabinet organizers to maximize the space
– too much stuff!

no judgement

Take a look in your cabinet to determine what is it's current condition *without judging yourself*. If it's a bit of a disaster and you are feeling judgy, stop and try this trick I have found useful. I want you to pretend it's NOT your home but the home of someone else who asked you to help them out. If it were a friend, you wouldn't scold or berate them, instead you would be kind and compassionate (at least I hope you would!). You would look at the cabinets with a different pair of eyes; problem solving eyes. *Those are the eyes you should look through now*. There is no room for judgement on this journey! Judgement only makes you feel crappy, it doesn't help solve problems! ♥ ♥

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assess

Open all the lower cabinet doors at once so you can take inventory. Darting your eyes from one cabinet to the next, look for items that should go or could go together, for instance there may be mixing bowls stashed in every cabinet. I also want you to notice how much empty vertical space there is – look for empty space above and around what is in there already. That is where the potential lies – in the empty spaces.

No empty spaces? Then your potential lies in the unwanted and unused.

Be sure to take a peek in the upper cabinets so you are aware of what's there. It's best to know all the parts of a puzzle before putting it together. There may be parts in the upper that belong with items in the lower, and the solution may not be to bring them down but to move those items up. Shifting items from lower to upper is another way to free up space where you need it most.

It isn't necessary to pull everything out of the cabinets to organize them, in fact I discourage it.

Just move things *strategically*.

If your cabinets are too cluttered to make any sense and grouping items together seems too difficult, another way to get started is by pulling out what you know you DO NOT WANT and put it in a GO AWAY or TRASH box. *Removing* items makes it easier to see what you really need and want. Avoid pulling everything out, I think that is too overwhelming. *Removing items strategically is the way to go.*

Things you no longer need but still has life, can be donated. Anything that is broken or is missing important parts can be thrown away or recycled unless replacement parts can be ordered, and you are willing to make the repair.

Use these reflective questions to help make decisions about what to keep, get rid of, or relocate to an upper cabinet.

reflective questions

– Is this pot / pan / appliance still used?
– Do I like using it?
– Does it do the same job as something else I like to use more?
– Does it have all it's parts?
– Is it in good working order?
– If it needs a new part, how likely you are to go through the steps to fix it, even if you find the part is it easy enough to make the repair?
– Is it narrow enough to fit in the upper cabinet?
– Is it light enough to comfortably raise above my head to put into an upper cabinet?
– If I move into an upper cabinet, will I remember that it is there? Sometimes we have the room to do it, but because it is so far off of what we would normally do, it'd be easy to forget you had it.

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how to avoid getting overwhelmed!

It's no doubt that organizing a kitchen is a big task, which is why it is broken into 4 parts – pantry, lower cabinets, upper cabinets and drawers. Trying to organize the entire kitchen in one sitting is a tall order, even for me, unless it is a small kitchen in a small house and your cabinets are not bursting at the seams.

If your kitchen ***is*** bursting at the seams, or you have what I would consider a larger kitchen (in a house over 2700 sq. ft.) you schedule the project over several days. Be sure to assess the upper cabinets when you assess the lower cabinets, but that doesn't mean you will sort, purge and organize them at the same time.

Approach with a Plan

Spending a few minutes answering these questions will save you frustration later.
Will you be able to get your lower kitchen cabinets organized in one afternoon (4 – 6 hours)? YES or NO.

YES Great! Do you have 4 -6 hours **in a row** that you can dedicate to complete the project? Y/N
Yes. Fabulous! Do you have any supplies pre-purchased ready to utilize? Y/N
Yes. Wonderful. Sounds like you are in an ideal position to get started.

NO If you are not able to completely organize your lower cabinets in 4-6 hours (sort/purge and organize), don't worry. You can break it up into more manageable segments by slightly adjusting your strategy.

Your assessment may be more challenging because it is likely you have a very crowded cabinet but take the time to really study what you have. Just LOOK with searching eyes. Work the Assess and Sort/Purge phases in the first day (or two), then work the Organizing phase over the next day (or two).

sort& purge

Working within your budgeted time, work one cabinet at a time. Using the mixing bowl example once again, as you are working in your first cabinet and you find a mixing bowl, take a look through the other cabinets to find any additional mixing bowls, then decide which among them you need to keep or can be purged. Put the loser in the GO AWAY box. *Continue with the original first cabinet* (it will take discipline to stay focused on the first cabinet but stick with it!) purging items and taking the time to see if you have any others of the same category elsewhere.

As you progress, keep grouped items together in the cabinet or on the counter, being careful not to get too much out at one time. THAT IS WHEN IT BECOMES OVERWHELMING. You will need to pull things out of the cabinets to find their companions or like-kinds but do so skillfully as to not make a crazy mess; you will need to clean up at the end and it does take time. This is not the time to go crazy and pull it ALL out!

Plan Time to Clean Up

Work for about 3/4 of the amount of time you have planned to save the last 1/4 to clean up. So if you have planned to work for 4 hours, plan to stop sorting, grouping and purging after 3 hours. If you aren't finished you will still need to function in your home in the meantime, and it will take time to strategically put items back in your cabinets.

Let's say after 2 or 3 hours you sorted through 3 cabinets, chances are you have purged enough to create some wiggle room. Yay! Condense the non-sorted and non-categorized items into the cabinets you haven't officially worked in yet (even though you have touched every cabinet by now you should be methodically going from cabinet to cabinet attempting to "finish" sorting and purging one before moving on to the next). Store the grouped and items together in a "sorted/purged" cabinet making sure it is clear to you so at your next work session you will be able to get right back at it with minimal confusion.

how to organize it?

Nesting is a HUGE Space Saver

Let's organize an imaginary kitchen together beginning with the imaginary mixing bowls we found scattered in all the cabinets in the example above. Now that they are gathered together I want you to nest them one inside another. You may discover that not all fit well together, so take a few minutes to figure out which ones do. (If you haven't already purged, do that now.) You will want your go-to favorite easily accessible, but how does that work with the nesting? If your go-to favorite when nesting lands in a position that you are willing, and/or it is easy to access it then that's a winner! If your go-to favorite when nesting lands in a position that is difficult to access, don't leave it there. It may end up resting on top of all the others, or on a shelf in an upper cabinet, or even on a wire cabinet shelf if that is the best option. Remember ease of access is important, but easily put away is more important. If you really want to use it, you will make the effort but the same can't be said for putting it away.

Do the same thing with pots, frying pans, Pyrex dishes, cookie sheets; pretty much anything that can stack and nest should be investigated and tested. Always assessing accessibility vs frequency of use.

Not All Lower Cabinets are Easy to Work With

Newer homes have lower cabinets that are much more open, spacious making it easy to see what you need. Older homes, and thus their cabinets, have more cramped, crowded and dark spaces. If you are in this situation, it's really important to be realistic about your space and to use it wisely.

In this situation, you may want to add a light into your cabinet. Inexpensive battery operated led lights can illuminate your dark cabinet making it much easier to see what you have, because as I say *all* the time, if you can't see it – it doesn't exist!

Lower cabinets are usually about 20"-24" deep, so it seems obvious to say put your often-used items in the front and your least often used items in the back but be smart about it. Consider the weight and how difficult (or easy) it will be to bring that item out when you are ready to use it. That's why I always play around with the arrangement. I will slide things around, testing it out until I am sure the position it takes is the best one.

Speaking of sliding. If you have grippy shelf liner in your cabinet, you won't be able to slide. I say get rid of it. Having the ability to slide things around is important no matter what kind of cabinet you have. I'm sure there are circumstances that need it, but I haven't found one that neeeeds it. For me, being able to slide things is sometimes a crucial component of the organizing process.

Labeling your shelf either on the shelf or on the door will help you keep track of what's back there. You might even take a picture of each item and post them on the cabinet door. A little unconventional yes, but when the door is shut no one but you will know. Not everyone needs directions to their kitchen but the other people in your home will have no excuse when it comes time to put things away. Lol!

Deep, dark and cramped cabinets warrant a good purge, or at the very least a serious examination and justification for all it's contents. Get real with yourself. Do you really need it all? Take the time to legitimately assess each thing. If even after parting with a few select items you still have "too much" there is still hope for organization. Positioning, lighting, and labeling all are important components of organizing. I will discuss organizing supplies in the section below and discuss possibilities for how they can be used.

some important organizing reminders:

– Frequency of use: The more often you use something, the easier it should be to retrieve.
– Quantity in category: Pots and pans are a large category; observe the size of other categories and how much space they'll need and put everything in that category together as much as is possible.
– Items infrequently used can be stored in the back.
– Right handed people tend to want to have all their important cooking items to the right of the stove and from there radiating outwards.

– Assign a cabinet to hold appliances.
– Practice pulling items out of the cabinet to see how easy or difficult it is.
– If there are too many items in one cabinet, they run the risk of never being used UNLESS it is something that is worth the effort.
Example: The Margarita Machine that is the highlight of your annual party can be stored in the back of the cabinet because you'd be willing to dig it out each year.
However, if that Margarita machine is only used randomly, you might skip using it if a blender were easier to retrieve, posing the question: Do you really need the Margarita machine?

Stack pots inside of pots large to small, do the same with pans.

practice!!!

Put things in place and practice interacting with them.

– Are things easy to retrieve?
– How many steps in the process does it take to get what you want? Strive for 1-2 for important every day items and 3-4 at the most for less often used items. Sometimes it's not possible, but it's something to strive for.

NOT working? Keep trying. Turn things 1/4 and re-position them until it works for you. Need help? I'm here for you! Join me on a ZOOM call and get your questions answered!

organizing supplies

Not all Lower Cabinets are going to need organizing supplies, but many will. If you didn't know these were options before then how could you have used them?! If you already use these items in this or another way, let me know. I'd love to hear what you do (I love learning of new ways to use organizing supplies.)

Cabinet Organizers

Here are my favorites for Lower Cabinets.

Lid Rack: This gizmo is a life saver and a favorite. It holds up to 6 lids and makes excellent use of space.

4 Sort Divider: Perfect for kitchens that do not have a skinny cabinet already for this purpose. It keeps cookie sheets and pizza pans in place and allows you to utilize the rest of a cabinet.

Cabinet Shelf: Not just for the pantry. I use this shelf to make retrieving baking dishes easier. (see photo).

Clear Box: Perfect for catching smaller items like extra food processor blades or Tupperware lids.

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Lid Rack Here you can see the Lid Rack in action, a simple but SO useful a tool. Each one able to hold 6 lids. Yes, not all cabinets will be able to use this exact one, but if you can fit it in, do it. It's the best rack I've used.

4 Sort Divider This narrow cabinet is dedicated to tall things. Cookie sheets, cupcake tins and cutting boards sit neatly in front and are held up with the 4 Sort Divider while serving trays in the back. This arrangement works for this family – it makes best use of the space and since trays are only used occasionally, it's worth the effort required to pull them out.

Clear box: This cabinets holds appliances (and salad spinner). Appliances often have attachments that don't live on the main appliance all the time. A Clear Box can take care of that. This box holds food processor blades and other small parts that are a part of various appliances. Things rotate around in this cabinet depending on the family's needs. Currently the Vitamix is out and Ninja is in. This will change as they change. Remember, it doesn't have to look perfect; just functional.

Cabinet Shelf: Cabinet shelves are not normally thought to be used in a lower cabinet, but why not? I know I don't want to lift up a bunch of glass baking dishes all the time to get to what I need. The cabinet shelf breaks the stack in half, so the ones used more often are the easiest to get to. The glass Pyrex dishes could also fit in the upper cabinet, but A) there isn't room and B) they aren't used often enough to bother. They are just fine here.

Get Creative!

This narrow cabinet is dedicated to temporary food storage and Tupperware. The Clear Box holds lids, and this set up is easy to maintain because the family only buys rectangular boxes that nest, except for the little bowls in the front that are used daily.

Don't be afraid to totally remove shelves (on right) or add shelves (on left). Whatever compartmentalizes the space, so it is functional; that's the end goal. These cabinets happened to be the same size, so it was easy to move one shelf out of one cabinet and into the other.

how long will it take?

If you work exclusively on the lower cabinets and you stay totally focused by not allowing yourself to get sidetracked, it will take about 3 – 4 hours for a thorough organizing job in a moderate sized home. If your home is over 2700 sq. ft or has a large volume of things it will take up to 6 hours. Decisiveness it the KEY to your progress, that and preparedness.

If you have a lot of stuff, refer to the section on **Approaching with a Plan**.

You could also ask a friend to help you. I know sometimes we get embarrased and we don't want even our closest friends to see our imperfections. Many of my clients have felt this way, and I totally understand, but what are friends for – TO HELP US! I'm sure your friends are just like mine, when I ask for help they are happy to have been asked. I know working out a troublesome situation on the phone is different than getting on your hands and knees and digging around in your kitchen cabinets, but again, that's what friends are for! Just be sure to pick a friend who will help you make progress and won't judge you and make you feel bad in the process.

If your cabinets are especially tangled up and over flowing, it can take a long time to untangle it. BUT DON'T PANIC! It might seem like an eternity to get it organized, but it isn't and **you can do it**! *Just think about how awesome your kitchen will function when you are finished! You will be so proud of yourself! And totally relieved.*

Remember, kitchens aren't stagnant and need regular adjustments and maintenance to continue to function properly. Anytime a new product is added, thoughtfully consider the best place to store it. After spending all this time re-organizing your kitchen, keep it functioning with regular maintenance.

your assignment

– Open your cabinets and dig in!
– Make a plan, review the **Tips for a Productive Work Session** in "The Process"
– If you think you need use the Action Plan Worksheet
– Have FUN! Life is meant for fun. Plan to have a good time!

ask Questions!

If your situation just isn't working out and you can't figure out why, ask us. You can contact us through the Facebook Group page or the Katy Home Organizer Facebook page. We'll be happy to help.

C3 video chats

By signing up for the SUMMER SPRINT you have access to the Clutter to Clarity Club [C3]. They are Real-Time LIVE Video chats during which you can ask me for suggestions and advice about your most bothersome areas. THESE ARE NOT PRE-RECORDED THEY ARE LIVE! Join me via smartphone or computer for your chance to get that special attention you need while learning from others as well.

And if you need me to see your space, I can! That's what I love about ZOOM. I can asses and evaluate your situation in real time.

BE SURE TO JOIN US on our daily ZOOM video calls through July 27th, check Facebook group for times, or for daily reminders and inspiration text **SPARKLY** to 57711.

ZOOM → https://zoom.us/meeting/549977691
FACEBOOK GROUP → www.facebook.com/groups/simpleorganizing

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upper cabinets

organizing@home | upper cabinet

today we will discuss:

The various "zones" that make the upper cabinets are included below. If your cabinets are not set up into specific zones, then your goal will be to make them specific. By clearly defining the spaces you will easily be able to see, use and put away whatever you have in your cabinets.

– Assessment
– Sort & Purge
– & Organize
These three areas are more of a 1,2,3 punch, with Reflective Questions mixed in.
– Organizing It
– How Long Will It Take?

Like all the other areas we've worked in, the process is the same. Assess and reflect, sort and purge, then organize. If you haven't read Organizing the Lower Cabinets, you'll want to check it out.

Grab a box and a cup of coffee.
Put on music, smile and say "Thank you for this awesome day!"

assess

Assessing the upper cabinets is not much different than the lower cabinets, it's just different stuff. For the most part, the things normally found in lower cabinets are:

– drinking glasses, coffee mugs, travel cups/mugs
– plates, bowls, mixing bowls
– serving dishes, serving bowls
– napkins, paper plates, cups
– plastic food storage / Tupperware
– vases, pitchers
– spices
– food
– light bulbs, batteries
– medicines
– cookbooks

If you have something in your lower cabinets that I've missed, please be sure to let me know!

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Most of the time the problems we typically find in upper cabinets are:
– things not grouped together by like kind
– space inefficiently used (wasted space)
– not utilizing cabinet organizers to maximize the space
– too much stuff!

Check your upper cabinets for vacant spaces. The vertical as well as the horizontal – these are your areas of potentiality. It's more obvious that horizontal surfaces hold potential, but so do the vertical and there are few great products you can use to make the most of the cabinet space you have.

Not all cabinets are the same. Some kitchens are equipped with plenty of upper cabinet storage, some with very little (that's me). What IS the same is that everyone has dishes and cups in their upper cabinets. I've never found anyone that doesn't, so that's where we will start.

sort & purge

Sorting and purging go hand in hand. As you determine if it's with it's like kind [sort], and belongs in that space/cabinet, you might as well decide if it is worth keeping at all [purge].

As you work your way through each cabinet, only pull out ***what doesn't belong***. Purged items can go straight into a Go Away box, and items waiting to group with like items in other cabinets can wait on the counter. In my experience, there usually isn't enough room to put everything on the counter and it's overwhelming when I do. I prefer to use the pre-defined spaces of the cabinets to help me group like kind. Once everything is grouped by like kind, I can then make the space more efficient and effective.

reflective questions:

These are nearly identical to the lower cabinet reflective questions, but they still apply.

– Is this dish / mug / tray still used?
– Do I like using it?
– Do I have too many of this type? Are there any I could purge and not miss?
– Does it do the same job as something else I like to use more?
– Does it have all it's parts / coordinating pieces? If not would I still use it?
– Is it in good condition? if not will I use it? can I get it repaired? will I ever repair it?
– Is there enough room in the cabinet for it? Are there others like it in the lower cabinet?
– Is it light enough to comfortably raise above my head and pull down – is it too heavy?
– Can it be stored elsewhere? Can it be displayed?

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& Organize!

I may as well jump right into it. Sometimes it's hard to even see a line that separates sort, purge, organize (other than those comma's). Some parts of the kitchen cabinets really need organizing elements / products, and some don't. We'll discuss each area by "zone".

Dishes

If you want to better utilize the space your dishes and plates occupy, a white wire cabinet shelf is what you need. Most often I'll set the large (bigger and heavier) plates on the bottom, and the medium (smaller and lighter) plates on top. As long as the stack isn't too high, plates are easy to pull out with a slight lift up and forward. Sometimes I will stack plates all in one stack (heck sometimes that is the only way it will work!) but I like to utilize a cabinet shelf whenever it makes sense, for function and aesthetics. The space *between the shelves* is usually the biggest limitation. There have been plenty of times I adjusted the wooden built-in shelf to make the cabinet function better, so remember that as an option. Just test it all out by repeatedly pulling out and putting away the bowl or plate. If it is at all difficult, try something else. It needs to be smooth and easy since putting away dishes is a daily chore.

The white wire cabinet shelves come in a few different sizes. There are medium, which is a square shelf, and large which is longer and rectangular, and there is also an extension (that comes with the large shelf). I most often use the large cabinet shelf with an extension, but it will all come down to what you have and the size of your cabinet.

If you own more dishes than will comfortably fit in the space, consider splitting the set. Do you really need all 12 dishes accessible every day? If the answer is no than move some to an upper or top shelf. Same goes for bowls or coordinating coffee cups. Which do you use more often – the large or medium plates?

Bowls

Bowls need wiggle room. Unlike a plate, you need space to pull the bowl up to release it from the stack. Bowls can go under a wire cabinet shelf, but they either can't stack very high, or you'll need to pull out the stack to get the bowl you want. Bowls should be made as easily accessible as plates. Easy to pull out and easy to put away. I usually place the bowls in position, then practice pulling one out and putting it away over and over to see how easy it is. If it's not easy, I know it won't work in the long term. I almost never but a bowl on top of a shelf unless there is a lot of clearance, or if it is a shallow bowl.

Glasses

Glasses/cups are space hogs! They vary in size and rarely are stack-able. They seem to multiply like rabbits. If they have lids, those often get lost in a random drawer… How to make best use of space in *this* cabinet?! There isn't an easy answer; well there is but you might not like it.

The best advice I can give you is to pare it down. Toss out the cheap freebies and amusement park keepsakes. I know you paid $12 for that souvenir cup shaped like a frog but in the end it's better to not bring it home in the first place. More than anything else, it's these souvenir cups and freebies that cause cabinets to get out of control.

If it has a lid, store it with the lid on. If the cups are stack-able, store them stacked and keep the lids together in a small container (an XS box might work for these lids). Lids can be stored either in the cabinet with the cups, or in a drawer with other lids and like items, or with the other food storage lids; I've seen it all and there is no one right way. It all depends on habits, available space, and proximity. Work with your instincts and not what you "think" it should be.

Oh, and the short easy answer: get rid of it all and only keep the absolute essentials. Minimalism is easy.

Coffee or Tea Zone

Nearly everyone I've met drinks coffee or tea in the morning. It makes most sense to set up a coffee/tea zone for this morning ritual. The coffee maker sits on the counter and in the upper cabinet is stored coffee and mugs. Tea fits this format as well, except instead of the tea maker on the counter, you might store the tea pot or brewer in the cabinet.

Usually a small cabinet is totally sufficient for this. If you need more space than that 1) evaluate what you have for potential purging, 2) consider utilizing the first and second shelf for the coffee Zone as opposed to only the bottom shelf, 3) and if you have a bazillion mugs, choose your favorites to be accessible and move the others up higher.

The goal is to have what you use daily easily accessible. That doesn't mean all the mugs have to be within reach, just the ones you want most.

If coffee or tea is what overflows your cabinet consider storing your back stock in the pantry and replenish as needed.

reflective questions:

– Do I like all the flavors of tea/coffee?

– How long have I had these flavors? years, months, days? It doesn't last forever! If you didn't like it when you bought it you probably wont' ever like it.

– If you are saving it for a guest, how long have you been saving it, and would you offer them this first? If they want to try it will you silently cringe inside hoping they don't also think it tastes weird?

– Do you have an excessive amount of tea or coffee? If it is still fresh and you will drink it, and if it doesn't all fit in the cabinet can it fit in the pantry, or in another cabinet? It's time to get creative. That's what the top shelves of the cabinets are good for.

Meds

Many people store medications in the kitchen and it can quickly become a mess if this area isn't maintained on a regular basis. I purge the medicines in my cabinet at least once a year and yet I still find things from two years ago. *How does that happen?!* I think it's because there are some that are only a little expired and I'll hang onto them for one more cycle.
Some people, like my husband, don't like to use their medications beyond the expiration date, but even he had expired meds in his stuff.

Years ago, our doctor told us that some OTC medications can still be used past their expiration date (within reason), they just lose their potency. However, if I leave it in the cabinet I'll be under the illusion that I have enough of that medicine even though I really need more. In the end my steadfast rule is *when in doubt, throw it out*!

Reflective Questions:

– Is it expired?
– Did the medication work effectively or were there side effects that prompted the purchase of a replacement medicine?
– Do you like the form this medication came in or do you prefer it in it's alternate form? – liquid vs. gel caps or tablet, etc.
– Are there way more of this medicine than you'll ever take before it expires? If yes, can you give some to a friend, neighbor, sibling, parent or child?

After your initial sort/purge you should be left with just a handful of categories. Chances are good you will have thrown away a fair amount of medicine, but if your cabinet still abounds with meds, it's time to pick and choose what to store in your prime real estate, and what needs to be your back stock. I like to group by ailment, it just seems to make sense and that's how we shop for it at the store.

The categories I like to create are:
– allergies / cold and flu / nasal – headache / pain – eyes / ears – Rx – stomach – First Aid

If someone regularly takes prescription or OTC meds, consider assigning a box for that person. Create zones for the categories I've listed using an appropriately sized box, just be sure it's not too tall. Remember to label the

boxes using the categories – no need to list every item, just the general category is sufficient. Be sure to regularly tidy up any bottles that were left out (I've seen this happen a lot).

Meds Organizing Tip

Remove the flaps from boxed meds. Take note which end has the expiration date and remove the flaps on the other end. Why? Flaps obscure the contents. Without flaps you can grab and go, and know when you're almost out so you can buy more.

how to dispose of meds?

In short, OTC meds can be tossed in the trash, but certain Rx meds should be brought to a **drug take back center**. I'm not expert, which is why I have found a reliable resource for you. Not all medicines are safe to throw in the trash or to flush; click to learn more about the dangers of flushing or trashing your meds when a take back program isn't available.

Cookbooks

Not to put down cookbook lovers, but seriously who uses a cookbook anymore?

Every client I've ever met with cookbooks at first says that use them but when I asked how they usually search for a recipe, they almost always say "a Google search". If you really intend to utilize your cookbooks, you'd better make them super accessible! Unless you are a die-hard cookbook loving chef *(and I know you are out there)* you will most likely resort to searching your favorite blogger or recipe site. If after reading this you realize, "hey she's right", seriously consider getting rid of your cookbooks or purging down to only *the must-haves*.

If you are keeping your grandmother's cookbook because it was hers, and not for the recipes, it is now a "keepsake" and could either be stored with keepsakes, or with your other books. Don't crowd your already busy kitchen with non-essential items.

Do you have piles of cooking magazines saved just for the recipes? While watching TV one night cut out the recipes you like and put them in a binder with clear sleeves, making sure to decide what's worth your time and effort as you go.

Where to store the cookbooks you intend to keep and use?

I like the idea of the pantry if yours is big enough, alternatively above the stove is popular, as is a kitchen cabinet. I'd wait until the more important and essential kitchen items are placed first, then figure out where makes the most sense based on available space. Cookbooks do not need prime real estate and should not be given priority. Remove them and bring them back in towards the end of your organizing project.

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Spices

I've seen spices stored in a variety of spaces in the kitchen: the pantry, a drawer, an upper cabinet, and even those fancy new pullout lower cabinet drawers. I have my preferences, and really it all comes down to what you are used to and what works in your space. For our purposes today I will focus on the upper cabinet, but will share my thoughts on the other locations as well.

Reflective Questions

– How long ago did I buy this spice? If it's over a year it may have lost some of it's flavor. Smell it, and if it's very fragrant it is still flavorful. According to Stilltasty.com "As a general rule, whole spices will stay fresh for about 4 years, ground spices for about 2 to 3 years and dried herbs for 1 to 3 years."
– Is this a spice blend my family and I enjoy? (not all are winners!)
– Do I have multiples of the same spice?
– Can I combine them to save space?
– Can I store some in an upper shelf or pantry as back stock?

Here are some tips for maximizing the shelf life of spices: Store spices in a cool, dark cupboard, away from direct heat or sunlight; keep tightly closed when not in use.

When organizing them, keep what you use all the time easily accessible. Although heat isn't good for spices, it's really common for people to store spices next to the stove. If you choose to store your spices next to the oven or stove be aware that the heat will make them expire faster than you might expect.
I like to keep my spices next to my stove, and my every day spices are at my eye level, while the others on the next shelves up. I am totally a "need to see it" kind of cook. I'm not very creative cook, so I may not think about using a spice unless I see it. Cooks that are recipe followers don't necessarily need to see every spice all the time because when the recipe calls for a spice, they will go look for it. It's still important to be able to see all the spices, but there's a difference between *looking for a spice* and *looking to see what you have*.

Then there are the cooks who just have a gift and can pull together flavors like magic. (Can I come over for dinner?) You still need to see what you have, but you know what you are looking for, or what can work. You see a spice and can imagine what it will taste like with all the other flavors.

There are many ways to group spices. You can choose to place your frequently used spices in the front with the least used at the back; by cuisines; or in alphabetical order. There is no wrong way, just do what works for you. The most important thing is spices must be seen to be used, and too many spices make it hard to see the ones you want most.

In the above photo, on the lower shelves a 3 tier platform elevates spices so they can more easily be seen. The next shelf up utilizes a lazy susan to see all of the available spices. A vacant space was left on the bottom shelf intentionally – it's always nice to have some wiggle room.

Lazy susan's are a must in a cabinet and work great for oils, vinegars, honey, sauces and other staples. Whether in your pantry or upper cabinets, lazy susan's help you easily see and access.

Storing Spices Elsewhere

As mentioned, spices can be stored in other places. You may have your set-up in place and it may be working for you – and that's perfect! I'm not here to change what works for you. When it comes to storing spices in the pantry, things to consider are how far away is the pantry from the food prep area? Some kitchens have the pantry "around the corner" or out of the immediate vicinity of food prep. Although I understand for the overall design of the kitchen and space, I would consider converting at least a portion of the cabinet to spices.

The fancy new tall skinny "drawers" for spices are interesting enough, but for me I am not a fan, and here's why. I don't want to have to crouch or hunch over to see my spices. From the top shelf, all the spices are viewed from the tops of the lids, not the front of the labels. The second or third shelves are about mid thigh height or lower, that is practically sitting on the floor by the time I crouch down. I wouldn't want to do that EVERY time I want to retrieve a spice. Tall spice containers or bottles/jars don't always fit in the space and the shelves aren't always adjustable. I have organized several of these drawers and have never liked any of them with the exception of the one that was at my eye level. It was eye level to hip level – that worked. If a builder wants to make good use of the pocket of space next to the stove, a better use are tall narrow cabinets to store cookie sheets and platters.

The last way I have seen spices stored are in a drawer, like a utensil drawer, but for spices. I think that works well. It's a bit more limited on what you can stock, but everything is easy to see and access. I think it is a reasonable variety of spices and any overflow can usually go in a pantry. This isn't a very common practice (at least in my neck of the woods) but it's common enough for the Container Store to sell a drawer organizer just or that purpose!

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zone locations

Sometimes I get called out to a house because the flow of the kitchen is off. The client might not know why the flow is off, but it just is. Most of the time it's because zones are not clearly defined, and sometimes it's because the zones aren't in the ideal place.
To know what zone placement is right for you think of the activities that take place; *all the activities*, and give each one a priority. For instance, plates bowls and cups are used daily and should have a prime location that is easy to get to from every vantage point possible.
Many of our behaviors are automatic and you may not have put a whole lot of thought into how to set up your kitchen when you moved in, so it might not be as efficient as it could be. But just a few tweaks can make a big difference.

how long will it take?

If you work exclusively on the upper cabinets and you stay totally focused don't get sidetracked, it will take about 4 hours. Be sure not to take everything out and spread it all around, it will overwhelm you! Work strategically and group within the cabinets, even if you are cluttering them up initially. You will still have to use the counters to help sort and group, but it will fill up faster than the cabinets.

Sit down and make a plan before jumping in. Utilize your timer to keep track of time and keep momentum!

your homework:

After you make your plan just go for it! Fling open the cabinets and get to it.
By now you should already have some momentum, use it to your advantage.
You've got this!

Remember:

– Get donations out of your house asap! Think about where the nearest drop off is and include it on your route.
– Return items back to family and friends. Add it to your calendar or ask them to stop by and pick it up (and admire your progress).
– Set a time limit to get it out of the house, and stick to it!

BE SURE TO JOIN US on our daily ZOOM video calls through July 27th, check Facebook group for times, or for daily reminders and inspiration text **SPARKLY** to 57711. Summer Sprint ends July 27th.

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drawers & counters

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today's focus

– Drawers
• Silverware
• Knives
• Utensils
• Dish Towels
• Tackling the Junk Drawer

– Countertops
– How Long Will It Take?
– Homework

Last stop on our tour of the kitchen are the drawers and countertops. Maybe the most stressful areas in the whole kitchen; but you are ready! Just like all other areas we have worked on, drawers and countertops follow the same process. You need to take a look at everything you have. While you do, you will sort and purge and group with like items. Compartmentalizing brings organization and clarity.

Grab a box or two, put on music and say "I can do this!"

drawers

The number of drawers you have is all you're going to have; it's important to make the most of those spaces. To maximize any drawer, it must be compartmentalized. The most common reason for disorganized drawers is a lack of compartments. When the space isn't divided up, things just slosh around in the drawer obscuring one another so it's difficult to easily see anything in particular. Let's review some of the items usually found in kitchen drawers and some tips on how to organize them.

Silverware

A staple in every household that can take over an entire drawer. To make the most of your silverware drawer, chose an organizer that is not too big or bulky. Some organizers are roomier than necessary and waste space. If you are tight on drawer space, you might gain some space by switching out your silverware organizer with interlocking drawer organizers by Rubbermaid.

Knives

If you don't store your knives on the counter in a butcher block or on a magnetic strip, then they'll be in a drawer. Grouping large knives separately from smaller knives reduces the risk of getting cut by a large knife when reaching in for a small knife.

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How many knives do you use? I've seen clients with a multitude of knives who really only use a few, but struggle to find their favorite. All those extra knives obscure the ones that are preferred. If this resonates with you, either cull through your knives, or compartmentalize them by grouping by size.

Utensils

There are SO MANY kinds! It's amazing! The utensils I typically see are: spatulas, tongs, stirring (oversized) spoons, whisks, scrapers, wooden cooking utensils, silicone utensils, can openers, cheese slicers, cheese graters, bottle openers, serving utensils that match the silverware, turkey baster, lemon squeezer, lemon zester,

When space is limited, be very selective about the utensils you keep. It's easy to end up with more than is needed especially when retailers sell utensils in multi packs. You may have bought it for that one spoon, but you got 4 spoons you didn't need; now what? Next time skip the multi-pack and just buy the one you need or give the extra ones to your sister.

Try to avoid buying gadgets that serve only one odd purpose. Unless you are a cooking enthusiast and will use them, you will more likely overwhelm your drawers with the extra gadgets. Before purchasing, think about your drawer space – how much you have and if you really need it. Kitchen gadgets are fun, but often unnecessary and if you are limited on space, you need to choose wisely.

Junk Drawer

Everyone has one, and some people have several. Things we have found in junk drawers:
spare keys, batteries, paper clips, rubber bands, twisty ties, clips, pens, notepads, locks, stamps, labels, money, gift cards, business cards, meds, scissors, screwdrivers, hammers, nails, tape, hair accessories, glasses, cameras, paper, etc.

Anything and everything lands in a junk drawer! More on the junk drawer later.

Dish Towels

How you fold your dish towel is an important factor when considering drawer space and best fit. After experimenting with different techniques, **this video shows** the best fold I have found, and the towels fit well in most places and spaces. To make best use of the space, it's important to be consistent in your fold. Make them all the same shape and stick to it! Even if the towel isn't the same overall size as the rest, fold it to have the same footprint.

To make it easy, you might consider culling down to just those that are the same size or only buying those that are the same size that are easy to fold. I know it might sound ridiculous but getting your towels to fit into its assigned drawer sometimes requires a little strategy. If you like to purchase cute towels every season, do it – just switch out what's in your drawer and store the extras elsewhere (like in the linen closet or laundry room, in a clear lidded container labeled: special occasion dish towels).

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Check out the video on how to fold a dish towel to make it fit into the drawer. Yes, it sounds a little silly, but it really makes a difference!

Pot Holders

This necessary item often lands in the same drawer as the dishtowels, but they aren't always the same shape as the dishtowels which makes it tricky. If you don't have space to spare in your dishtowel drawer, you'll need to find another place; what is one to do?

One solution is to stick them on the fridge using a command hook, or a suction cup hook like the one in the photo. They only hold a few, but how many hands do you have anyway?

Another option is the inside of the pantry or cabinet door. I'm not a huge fan of hanging things on doors, but a couple of pot holders passes the cabinet door test:

1. it's quiet
2. it's lightweight
3. fits easily (it's small)
4. it doesn't swing around wildly thus blocking the door from closing properly

TIP | Use a command hook to hang pot holders on the fridge.
If your fridge is brushed metal, choose one that matches your fridge.

Paper

In my organized opinion there is NO REASON for paper to live in a kitchen drawer. The only exception is a notepad stored in the junk drawer, or a drawer just outside the "main" kitchen zones. (If you have a built-in desk/computer nook in your kitchen that would be handled differently; more like a desk drawer.)

If you have a drawer with paper, product manuals and other clutter, get them OUT! Your manuals belong somewhere else. We often will put them in either a M or L clear box (see "Organizing Supplies" for details) or a scrapbook box works well too. Bottom line do NOT dedicate a drawer to manuals. HUGE waste of space.

reflective questions

Whether it be silverware, knives, utensils, or the junk drawer, reflective questions will help you figure out what to do with all the stuff.

- Am I using this anymore?

- Do I like how it feels in my hand when I hold or use it? Is it comfortable? Is it sturdy enough to do the job?
- Is it still serving my needs or is there something I like better and use instead?
- Do I have too many of this item?

sort & purge

Compartmentalize is the word of the day. Really a picture is worth a thousand words today, so check out the photos as a guide on what compartmentalizing a drawer looks like.

Stores like Target, Walmart, Bed Bath and Beyond, Lowes and others have regular stock of drawer organizers, then there is of course the Container Store and Amazon. Interlocking drawer organizers are terrific, and even better if they have straight sides with no lip.

Rubbermaid Interlocking Organizers: Versatile
$3 -$5 each piece

Everything Organizer: Perfect for the junk drawer. $17

Clear Acrylic: Usually a bit more expensive but they sure look nice.
$4 -$7 each piece

TIP | Short on drawer organizers? Arrange them to create a pocket of space. You don't always have to fill the entire drawer with organizers, but it does look nice.

tackling the junk drawer

Since it is a source of anxiety for so many, let's focus our attention there.

The steps are the same regardless of the space. The main obstacle in getting the junk drawer organized is your attitude about it. We've spoken before about detaching yourself from any negative feelings you might be experiencing. It's time to do that again.

This includes fussing about it in your head. Ignore that fussy voice, take a deep breath and say out loud "I can do this!!" several times to drown out the fussy voice! (Yes, I really do want you to say it out loud.)

The Steps

– Clear the counter, you will need some space to spread out.

– Because everything looks like trash, just pick something and start collecting. You could search for batteries, pens, paper clips, paper – it doesn't matter just focus on one thing first. Soon piles of like items will appear like magic.

– Now that you have piles, weed out what doesn't belong in the drawer and put every else back in. Either purchase a drawer organizer for junk drawers (those are actually pretty good) or use individual containers and build your own.

Need extra help? Ask your higher power for some help. Seriously! There's no limit on what your higher power can help you with. The junk drawer is small potatoes.

Can't use the counter to work on the junk drawer because of all the clutter?

– Start with the counters first, then do the junk drawer OR pull the drawer out and work on it elsewhere. Most homes in our area (SE Texas) have drawers that come out. See our video on how to remove a drawer.

"Lay junk here!" says every horizontal surface.

countertops

You want to have clear counters, but what happens? Countertops can be like one giant junk drawer. Without a functioning system in place to manage all your stuff, it quickly gets out of control.

If what's typically on your counter actually belongs in an upper or lower cabinet, you should have addressed that in the previous days. If you overlooked that step, today's your day.

Paper is the biggest problem on the kitchen counter, followed by things that come out of husbands pockets, kids backpacks, recent purchases from the store (still in the bag), items taken out of the cabinet and never returned, and purses – just to name a few.

Decluttering the Countertop

– Gather up all paper and stack in criss-cross piles to keep things separated.
– Place important time sensitive paper on top OR move to a safe place.
– As you address each items on the counter, ask yourself these Reflective Questions:TIP | When you get home, always take items out of the bags immediately no matter what the purchase. More items have been "lost" in the bag they came in, than you can imagine.

- Where does this belong?
- Who does it belong to?
- Is it still needed / relevant / necessary?
- Do I need a tray, basket, or jar here to catch some of these things?

Walk yourself through the same steps as we've been doing. Sort, purge, group like items, dump, donate, distribute. Ask more reflective questions to help you along. Check our eBook on Paper Management to help with the paper.

what to do about paper?

In the entry, paper can quickly take over a space if it's not managed consistently. Immediately when paper comes into your house make a decision about what it is. If it is junk mail, immediately recycle it.

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There are a few basic categories with paper:

1) Resource/reference: Information you may need to retrieve later that has a deadline, like an upcoming party. For these types of papers, I recommend first entering the event in your calendar with a reminder alarm set well in advance if there something you need to do to prepare. After you've entered the data into our calendar you can either toss the paper, photograph it, or place it in your mail box until the event passes.
2) Bills: Most clients I meet now have some form of automatic online billing in place and only use their paper bills as a reminder, or to verify the bill was paid. Once the bill is paid it can be tossed. If you pay online, there is a digital record, eliminating the need to keep a paper bill.

   Think about your preference – would you rather have the paper reminder? Just be sure to toss it each month. Don't want to paper clutter coming in each month? Anything you pay monthly can be set up automatically, if not via the bank or utility company, then definitely through your bank.

3) Store coupons: Coupons are a tricky lot. If you are a serious coupon user, you don't need me to tell you what to do with them. For the rest of us *passive* coupon users, I suggest asking yourself what the likelihood is that you'll use the coupon before it will expire? Are you planning a purchase at that store in the near future? If you might, or aren't sure, then hang on to them but be sure to sort through your mail box monthly to clear out unwanted or expired coupons.
4) Junk mail: It goes straight in to the recycling bin – don't even set them on the counter!

Get a mailbox

If there are several members in your household who receive mail, give each one a mailbox. I like to use magazine holders because they are vertical, take up less space, and come in plain as well as decorative styles. Label each one and let each person manage it.

Be sure to maintain it monthly by sorting through it.

how long will it take?

If you work exclusively on the drawers and countertops and you stay totally focused by not allowing yourself to get sidetracked, it will take about 4 hours. If your countertops are piled high with stuff, it will take longer.

This is the kitchen island, and the counters looked like this, too. The counters alone would take 4 hours to sort and purge. As a point of reference for you, this is an excessive amount of countertop clutter.

This kitchen was average sized, and had quite a bit of clutter on the counters and kitchen table. It took about 5 hours to clear the counters and organize the drawers.

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your assignment

Start with the hardest thing first, but the most satisfying in the end (I bet it's the junk drawer). If you can get through that, it's all downhill from there! *OR if you are pressed for time*, skip the junk drawer for now – but go back to it when you can. Honestly, it'll be worth it and you will wonder why you didn't just do it sooner.

Remember to think positive. No cussing and fussing in your head about the condition of your drawers or counters. Talk to yourself like you would someone you love. Keep a positive mental attitude about it all and it will just be easier. I promise.

BE SURE TO JOIN US on our daily ZOOM video calls – check Facebook group for times, or for daily reminders and inspiration text **SPARKLY** to 57711 Summer Sprint ends July 27th, 2018.

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organizing@home

maintenance

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today's focus

- Regularly Declutter
- Monitor
- Modify
- C3 & Zoom

regularly declutter

It might seem obvious to include regularly declutter as part of Maintenance but it must be mentioned. Even though we totally wish they would, things just don't put themselves away. Just like the weekly chores we had to do when we were little, decluttering is a weekly event - or it should be. Regularly sweeping through the house to gather up stray items and put them away where they belong is how to stay on top of the clutter problem. By regularly decluttering you will be able to keep tabs on the situation.

monitor

In order to really know if your system is working it must be monitored. Monitoring is simply observing and making a mental note of what you see. If it seems cumbersome to pull things out of the cabinet or you notice that your family has gotten even worse about putting their shoes away, it's time to re-assess the situation.

Ask yourself reflective questions, ask your family reflective questions, to get to the root issue - and sometimes it's not what we think.

modify

When there is clarity about what isn't working and why, then it can be modified. Try a new arrangement or set up and play with it for a bit. Walk by it, interact with it, turn it, move it. The solution is often just a tweak away. Don't be discouraged if you don't get it right the first time, give it some time to gel and if it doesn't work keep trying. And don't be dismayed if it doesn't look like the picture on Pinterest, those are momentary snapshots in someone else's home. It's unfair and unrealistic to compare your life to the mystery occupant of that photo.

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ask Questions!

If your situation just isn't working out and you can't figure out why, ask us. You can contact us through the Facebook Group page or the Katy Home Organizer Facebook page. We'll be happy to help.

c3 video chats

By signing up for the SUMMER SPRINT you have access to the Clutter to Clarity Club [C3]. They are Real-Time LIVE Video chats during which you can ask me for suggestions and advice about your most bothersome areas. THESE ARE NOT PRE-RECORDED THEY ARE LIVE! Join me via smartphone or computer for your chance to get that special attention you need while learning from others as well.

And if you need me to see your space, I can! That's what I love about ZOOM. I can asses and evaluate your situation in real time.

If you have any questions, comments or thoughts, reach out in the Facebook group AND

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ZOOM → https://zoom.us/meeting/549977691

FACEBOOK GROUP → www.facebook.com/groups/simpleorganizing

Until next time…

Have a super sparkly day!