INTRODUCTION:

How many times have you looked into a room in your home and thought, "I've got to get that space organized." We all do it, but where do you start? What can you really do to keep it organized? Smead has put together this e-book to help you answer those questions. We've compiled the best tips from members of the National Association of Professional Organizers to help you tackle any room in your home. Everyone is different, so choose the tips that best fit your style of organization.

ABOUT SMEAD:

Smead has been keeping people organized for over 100 years by pioneering many of the products used in the most efficient offices, homes and schools. Smead is a woman-owned company well known for its high quality, environmentally responsible products designed for one purpose: Keeping You Organized.
GETTING STARTED: The Basics

So you’re ready to get organized, but you don’t know where to start. Before we dive into specific room-by-room suggestions, let’s go over some basics.

What is clutter and how do I prevent it?

I always ask my clients to tell me their definition of clutter before we begin working — it’s only when you have a clear idea of what clutter looks like that you can weed it out. My definition is “Anything extraneous or unnecessary that takes up a valuable resource (like time, space, energy, or money) without noticeably improving your quality of life in return.”

Ramona Creel

Clutter occurs when more comes in than goes out — so a good organizing system helps you set limits on new acquisitions. One example is the “one-in-one-out rule” — which means that every time you buy a new pair of shoes or subscribe to a new e-zine or get a new bank statement, an old one goes away. Another is setting numerical/spatial limits on how many of a certain item you’ll own — like you’ll only allow yourself as many ceramic frogs as will fit on this display shelf, or ten pairs of shoes, or a year’s worth of old emails and utility bills.

Ramona Creel

Decluttering is all about being able to draw boundaries — choosing to include only those things (including information, activities, and people) provide you with value and serve a purpose in your life, and letting go of those that don’t. The moment you start making conscious decisions about how you use your space/time/energy, you’ll instantly find yourself clearing the decks.

Ramona Creel

Decluttering is not a one-time activity — it’s an ongoing process. Think of it like exercising or brushing your teeth — you can’t just do it once and be done. You have to engage in regular maintenance to keep the clutter at bay.

Ramona Creel

Ask yourself, “How much is enough?” The less stuff you have, the easier it will be to manage and maintain. Have you ever noticed how many things you don’t need? Remember the 80/20 rule. In general, we only wear 20% of the clothes we own. We only reference 20% of the papers we file.

Linda Samuels
**Where do I start?**

*Create a vision* for each space to serve as your guide through the rest of the organizing process. Identify the purpose of each space and how you want it to feel. This also applies to time management and managing your calendar.

Clare Kumar

**What can I do?**

*Create systems that are natural extensions of your habits.* For example, if you are used to sorting and storing your mail in the kitchen but it has taken over the counters and table, then instead of relocating the activity to another area in the home (such as a home office), create a mail management system right in your kitchen. You will be more likely to stay organized if your system is in your original go-to area.

Leslie Josel

*Return things to square one.* That might include putting away the dishes, clearing off your desk, or placing dirty clothes in the laundry basket. This will help to keep spaces clutter-free and promote mental clarity as you begin your day.

Linda Samuels

When things have no place to go, they collect in piles. Establishing a place to put your things helps to reduce clutter. Make sure that what you keep is home worthy. Is it useful? Do you love it? Does it fit? Do you need so many? Is it time to let go? *Ask the questions before putting things away.*

Linda Samuels

Decide on which items serve your life now and get help to let go of those you don’t have space for. *Feel more at peace and in control.*

Clare Kumar

What if the clutter represents things no longer wanted? Do I really want to keep my marble collection or pants that no longer fit? Is it time to reroute? There are many people that would appreciate receiving them. Can you *donate to a local charity* or give to family or friends? Many charities will pick up clothing, linens, furniture, and household items.

Linda Samuels

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**Don’t postpone.** Keeping things because you might need them someday results in clutter accumulation. When you hear yourself uttering the “someday” phrase, ask these questions: Is it worth the space? Is it worth the mental energy? Is it likely I’ll actually need or use it? Is my focus on “someday” preventing me from fully living and enjoying now?

Linda Samuels

Ask yourself, “Do I use this? Would I purchase this again?” Now say it again. Carefully consider every item in your house. *If it doesn’t make you happy, look great or has lost its usefulness, it’s a no.* Put it in the donate pile and remove it from the house immediately.

Leslie Josel

Having a hard time getting rid of something sentimental that you no longer have use for? Relegating it to a box in the basement or garage does nothing to celebrate it. *Take a picture instead!* It will both reduce clutter instantly and honor the memory in a respectful manner.

Leslie Josel

**Things to remember:**

Clutter management doesn’t have to involve hours of time. Doing periodic *ten minute sessions* can be less overwhelming and more doable. What can be decluttered in short spurts? Take ten minutes to declutter your handbag, a short stack of desk papers, or a single drawer.

Linda Samuels

*Invest in the right storage solutions* to keep your possessions accessible and well-preserved. A well-designed closet or storage solution can be attractive, functional and motivating.

Clare Kumar

*Before you buy, think about whether you need it,* but also where you will store it. Factoring this aspect into purchasing habits will prevent clutter from entering your home.

Linda Samuels

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**Organomics Challenge:**

Keep an ongoing giveaway box or bag in your coat closet or garage. Every time you come across an item you don’t wear, want or need, toss it into the bag or box. Donate when full. This will eliminate the need for a major de-cluttering process in the future.

Diane Albright
ORGANIZING TIPS: Space Management

Where do I start?

Reclaim control. Excess clutter can cause stress. **Pick one area to begin** organizing and de-cluttering. Determine use for that area. Re-route items that don’t belong. Be ruthless about remaining contents. Release what isn’t useful, you no longer want, or has overstayed its welcome.

Linda Samuels

When clearing clutter from any area, **decide how you want to ultimately use that space.** If you want to use your kitchen counters for making dinner – then remove everything that does not involve meal preparation. No exceptions; no mail, no pocketbook or laptops are allowed to stay there.

Heather Ahern

Organize one room at a time by **categorizing the contents** you see first, then dig into drawers and closets. Purge anything you don’t use, like or want. Then re-arrange the room so items are kept where you use them. Some things may have to move to another room–do that last.

Debbie Lillard

What can I do?

**Take ten to fifteen minutes** at the end of your day to clean up your office, kitchen or emails. Doing so gives you time to decompress from the day and allows you to come back to a clean space the next day!

Bonnie Joy Dewkett

**Let some furniture do double duty.** Use a chest as a coffee table, a bench with storage in the entryway, or little bookcases as bedside stands.

Maureen Heinen

**Use your walls** as much as possible. Hooks and racks can turn a wall or the back of a door into a storage system.

Seana Turner

Organomics Challenge:

Choose a space you spend a lot of time in. Now pick 10 things to give away to someone who will love or use them more than you do.

Jennifer Ford Berry
Where do I start?

Don’t know where to start? **Tackle your desktop first.** Chances are the paperwork that has been stacking up is more important than the bankers boxes of old bills sitting under your desk. From here work clockwise or counterclockwise throughout the space. This will help you gauge your process and help you pick up where you left off when you take a break.

Amanda Kuzak

For your desk set up, if you are right-handed, have your IN Bin or TO Do pile on the left, an open space to work in front of you and a Going Out bin or table to your right. Flip the process if you are left-handed. **Get everything back in place at the end of the day.**

Debbie Lillard

What can I do?

**Create a system** for organizing all the paper in your office and home. Designate specific areas for receipts, mail and your kids’ homework.

Geralin Thomas

**Organize unused cords and cables.** Use a binder clip and a label maker to separate, mark and store each cord neatly.

Geralin Thomas

Organize your books. Donate, sell or swap books you aren’t going to read. **Create a storage system for your keepers.** Organize by author, color, genre, size or subject. Pull spines toward the front of the shelf for easy cleaning.

Geralin Thomas

Organomics Challenge:

Jot down your printer ink details in your phone or wallet so you don’t have to guess at the office supply store.

Maureen Heinen
ORGANIZING TIPS: The Bedroom

Where do I start?

Struggle with which clothing to donate? At the beginning of a season with your clothes still on the hanger, pick up the clothing and turn all of your hanging clothes so the hanger is going over the rod the opposite way. After you wear and launder an item, put it back in your closet with the hanger going over the rod the normal way. At the end of the season you’ll easily see which items you didn’t wear.

Diane Albright

What can I do?

Have a small bedroom? Try putting the dresser inside the closet. This provides storage and frees up floor space.

Seana Turner

Organize your shoes. Pick up any shoes around the house. Choose a shoe storage solution for your master closet. Clear plastic boxes are the easiest way to quickly find your favorite pair. If you store shoes in your coat closet, purchase a shoe rack or storage bench.

Geralin Thomas

Consider your closet an ‘active’ not ‘archive’ area. Keep the current season’s items handy but store other rarely used items elsewhere.

Maureen Heinen

Be ruthless. Clothing clutter management begins with asking good questions. Does it fit? Do I feel fabulous wearing it? Does it look good on me? When was the last time I wore it? Can it be donated, consigned, or given to a friend?

Linda Samuels

Folding garments so they can be stored vertically in your drawer lets you see what you own and makes the most of your wardrobe.

Clare Kumar

Keep order in your linen closets. Fold washcloths just once so they stack better and become a tower that won’t tip over so easily. Saves time too.

Maureen Heinen

Organomics Challenge:

Clear off your bedside table... your sleeping area should connote peace and serenity.

Seana Turner
Where do I start?

Organize rooms into ‘zones’ such as clothes, toys, holidays, crafts, laundry, tools, photos and memorabilia. This will help you know not only where to look for items, but also where NOT to look for them.

Maureen Heinen

What can I do?

Declutter the cabinet under your kitchen sink. Store cleaning supplies in bins for easy access.

Geralin Thomas

Prune your cache of kitchen containers. Recycle rarely used food containers. Throw away any container missing a lid. For a fresh start, order a set of square containers with lids - they use less space and stack easily.

Geralin Thomas

Rotate the food in your pantry. Check expiration dates and pull older items to the front. Some items - distilled white vinegar, honey, unopened maple syrup, salt, sugar, pure vanilla extract - last indefinitely when stored in a cool, dark place.

Geralin Thomas

Clean your refrigerator. Remove all food and place in a cooler. Wipe walls and shelves with hot water and a mild dishwashing detergent, then rinse. Remember to clean drawers and drip pans. Don’t forget the ice maker and water dispenser on the door.

Geralin Thomas

Seriously consider getting rid of kitchen appliances that you seldom use.

Seana Turner

Purge unwanted craft supplies. Donate or throw any craft paper, paint, pens, markers, adhesives, tools and yarn you don’t want. Store what you keep in one place. Group similar items.

Geralin Thomas

Organomics challenge:

Remove clutter hanging on your refrigerator.

Geralin Thomas
ORIGINOMICS: Author Bios

Smead would like to thank the following contributors and members of the National Association of Professional Organizers for their tips and expertise included in this e-book. Feel free to contact any of them directly to request assistance in your next organizing project. Find more organizing tips and solutions at smead.com.

Heather Ahern uses the mantra “Make Sense of your Stuff... Create Peace in your Home!” Heather is a professional organizer in Bridgewater MA. Her company The FUNCTIONal Home has been helping people struggling with disorganization or seniors wishing to downsize. Working side by side with her clients to change the energy in their space and create a home that is alive and inspiring, A Golden Circle member of the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO) and the National Association of Senior Move Managers (NASMM), Heather also serves as the Director of Professional Development for NAPO New England. www.thefunctionalhome.com

Diane Albright is a Certified Professional Organizer and nationally recognized expert in the field of organization and productivity. She is the creator of Work Piles Made Easy® and Ten Minutes a Day to Organizing Success®. As a regular contributor on television programs and in books and magazines, Diane has been featured as an organizational expert on TLC’s Jon & Kate Plus 8; HGTV’s Mission Organization; E! Network’s The Soup; The Montel Williams Show; Daytime Talk Show; QVC; PBS; FOX Good Day Philadelphia; FoxBusiness.com; and is a regular on a local morning news show. www.DianeAlbright.com

Jennifer Ford Berry is known as Life’s Organization Expert and has been helping people clear the clutter from their lives for over 12 years. She is also the best selling author of the Organize Now! series including: Organize Now!, Organize Now! your money, business and career, Organize Now! think and live clutter-free. www.jenniferfordberry.com

Ramona Creel is a 15-year veteran professional organizer who has earned numerous industry awards for her work with clients, and is well-known for mentoring other POs. In addition to bringing The Professional Organizer’s Bible down from the mount (sans stone tablets), Ramona is also the author of The A-To-Z Of Getting Organized: A Grown-Up Picture Book For The Chaotic And Cluttered — she writes seven different blogs, has worked with hundreds of clients, and has delivered scores of presentations on getting organized. Ramona resides on the roads of America as a full-time RVer—living and working in a 29-foot Airstream. www.RamonaCreel.com

Ellen Delap For over 10 years, Certified Professional Organizer and Certified Family Manager Coach Ellen Delap has helped her clients make time and space for what’s important to them by organizing their homes, offices and daily living. Ellen is the owner of Professional-Organizer.com. She specializes in working with ADD and ADHD families, adults and students. Ellen has been featured on Stretch Your Dollar on ABC19 Houston, in the Houston Chronicle, a guest speaker on radio KLOVE, and is a national expert on The Clutter Diet, an online organizing website. She is a Golden Circle member of the National Association of Professional Organizers and a specialist in chronic disorganization and ADHD with the Institute of Challenging Disorganization. www.professional-organizer.com

Bonnie Joy Dewkett CPO, is a nationally recognized organizing expert, author, motivational speaker, and internet radio personality. She began organizing as a child, and she has been organizing ever since. Her company, The Joyful Organizer® organizes and implements organizational systems for the home and office. These changes allow her customers to create calm from chaos at work and at home. Bonnie is passionate about helping her clients meet their organizational goals, and loves to see the positive impact that getting organized has on their lives. www.theflylorganizer.com

Maureen Heinen is one of those naturally organized people who instinctively knows what to do in chaotic or cluttered situations. She’s also studied the art of organizing extensively throughout her adult life. Since her company was established in 2006, homes and offices in every conceivable condition have been completely transformed into places of beauty and efficiency. Maureen excels at implementing simple yet creative systems that are designed to keep any home or office in order. She’s a compassionate listener determined to understand her clients’ ultimate goals. She has spent years perfecting her organizing skills and decades living a life of thoughtful reduction and voluntary simplicity. www.SendInMaureen.com

Roz Howland is an Accredited Professional Organizer based in Brisbane Australia. Roz worked in Sri Lanka, Italy and Australian Indigenous communities. This has allowed her to be a part of organizing styles across the globe. Beginning her pioneering professional organizing business, InOrder, in 2006 as a residential organizer, Roz quickly realized her niche lay in business organizing and in 2009 was awarded the Cairns Business Women’s Club Small Business Owner of the year. Roz now specializes in business and corporate clients, delivering workshops, hands-on coaching and speaking throughout Australia. www.productivityprofessional.com.au

Leslie Josel is the Principal of Order Out of Chaos, an organizing consulting firm specializing in student organizing and chronic disorganization. She is a certified member of NAPO, holds her ADHD and Hoarding Specialist certifications from the ICD, and has her ADHD Coaching certification from JST coach training. Leslie is known as a respected resource on ADHD and Executive Functioning in students and has been featured in national broadcast and print media on these subjects. She also speaks nationally to parent and educator groups on a variety of issues. Leslie is the creator of the award winning Academic Planner: A Tool for Time Management. She is also the co-author of the Complete Diabetes Organizer. Connect with Leslie at www.orderoochaos.com

Lori Krolik is a professional organizer and productivity specialist, and founder of More Time For You (Palo Alto, CA). For over 18 years she’s helped residential and small business clients create systems out of their most serious clutter challenges. Lori brings the expertise and insight needed to create an organized system that is personalized to a client’s space and lifestyle. Lori became a Certified Productive Environment Specialist in 2010, is a long time member of NAPO (National Association of Professional Organizers) and founder of the Los Altos chapter of Women’s Networking Alliance. www.moretimeforyou.net
Clare Kumar is the founder of Streamlife®, an organizing and productivity company that inspires and guides her clients to live productive lives with less stress and greater fulfillment. Clare appears frequently in media as a productivity expert and is seen regularly on national television. She was recognized with the 2013 Harold Taylor Award by the Professional Organizers in Canada for her “outstanding contribution to the organizing profession.” Clare created a four-step plan which can be applied to any area of life: the workPLAN™ — for greater productivity, the homePLAN™ — to create energizing living spaces, and the lifePLAN™ — a practical approach to creating a life without regret. Clare authored The Organized Family planning calendar and is the co-creator of internationally in-demand Pillo® home organizing products. www.StreamLife.ca

Amanda Kuzak is an energetic go-getter and has a passion for helping people lead more efficient and organized lives. The founder of Kuzak’s Closet, she has been a professional organizer since 2004. Each project is specifically tailored to meet her client’s needs. She loves the fact that each job is unpredictable and thinks outside the box to customize professional organizing solutions for each client. A popular blog author, Amanda has also been published as a contributing author of bestselling inspirational book, The Spirit of Silicon Valley — Journeys and Transformations Beyond Technology and as a guest contributor in the book The Cheap Chica’s Guide to Style by Liliana Vasquez. www.kuzakscloset.com

Regina Lark is founder and president of A Clear Path: Professional Organizing for Home, Work, Life. As a Certified Professional Organizer in Chronic Disorganization (CPO-CD) she specializes in working with people with chronic disorganization, ADHD, hoarding disorders, as well as the folks with way too much stuff! Regina was recently elected to serve as President of the Board of Directors for the National Association of Professional Organizers. Los Angeles chapter. She is a speaker and trainer on issues ranging from hoarding to time management. Regina’s first book, the Psychic Debris, Crowded Closets: The Relationship between the Stuff in your Head and What's Under your Bed. Her second book, Before the Big O: Professional Organizers Talk about Life before Organizing. www.AClearPath.net

Deb Lee is a Certified Professional Organizer® and productivity specialist in the Washington, DC metro area, and the founder of D. Allison Lee LLC. Deb also loves technology and is the Small Business Tech Advisor with SOHOTechTraining.com where she helps entrepreneurs make sense of small business tech tools (like social media, Wordpress, apps, and more!). Deb is a blogger and her advice has been featured in USA Today, on WUSA9 television, Enewtome.com, Rubbermaid.com, Unclutterer.com, and The Clutter Diet. www.dallisonlee.com

Debbie Lillard is an internationally recognized expert on home organizing, and has been featured on A&E’s Hoarders and HGTV’s Mission: Organization as well as radio shows across the US, Canada and England. Her practical approach to simplifying your life and her creative ideas make her a favorite with such national publications as Chicago Tribune, Better Homes & Gardens, Woman’s Day, and Disney’s Family Fun. Debbie has run Space to Spare, a professional organizing service in the Philadelphia area since 2003 and has three published books: Absolutely Organized (North Light Books, 2008), Absolutely Organize Your Family (Betterway Home, 2010) and A Mom’s Guide to Home Organization (Betterway Books, Dec. 2012) which is a combination of both books under a new title & cover. www.SpaceToSpare.com

Lisa Montanaro is a productivity consultant, success coach, business strategist, speaker and author who helps people live successful and passionate lives, and enjoy productive and profitable businesses. Her online learning platform, LMGUniversity.com, provides courses globally to improve people’s lives, businesses and careers. Lisa is the author of The Ultimate Life Organizer: An Interactive Guide to a Simpler, Less Stressful & More Organized Life. Through her work, Lisa helps people deal with the issues that block personal and professional change and growth. To receive her free toolkit, Achieve Powerhouse Success with Purpose, Passion & Productivity, visit www.LisaMontanaro.com/toolkit.

Angelo Ploetz is a Certified Professional Organizer®, blogger, podcaster, speaker, founder of Girlfriends Get Organized an organizing community with tips and inspiration for women, and POSH Space in Austin, Texas specializing in home organizing, paper filing systems and move-in unpacking services. For tips and organizing eye candy visit www.girlfriendsgetorganized.com/blog.

Annie Rohrbach has been a professional organizer since 1987, working primarily in homes and home offices. Her first book, Conscious Order: Clear Your Mind, Leave Order Behind combines her organizing expertise with universal principles and neuroscience. Her holistic approach has transformed the lives of thousands because it stresses the importance of identifying and clearing out the mental clutter first. Then it is much easier to know what is important, make better decisions about what to let go of and what to keep. www.consciousorder.com


Geralin Thomas named Best Chronic Disorganization Expert in the organizing industry in 2013, earned the highest level of certification in the professional organizing field as a Level V, Master Trainer, CPO-CD in 2010. Television viewers may recognize Geralin from her appearances on the Emmy-nominated A&E program Hoarders, The Today Show, The Joy Behar Show, and The Nate Berkus Show. Geralin has helped hundreds of professional organizers reach their goals and build their organizing businesses through one-on-one coaching and other training programs. www.metropolitanorganizing.com

Seana Turner founded The Seana Method in 2010 because she wanted to help people. She was saddened by the many people in her life who complained that their spaces were a mess, their schedules were out of control, and they felt overwhelmed by their “stuff”. Seana attended The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania where she earned a BSE. Over time she developed The Seana Method, and since her launch has found great joy in helping others realize the freedom that organization can bring to life. www.TheSeanaMethod.com

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