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MAKE TIME FOR PAPER

You'd think that with the advent of computers and e-mail, we'd be using a lot less paper. But, in reality, paper use is rising exponentially each year, according to a 2002 study at the University of California at Berkeley.

What's a person to do? Learning how to effectively handle your papers is key. Paper management isn't difficult. (Really!) The hard part is finding and dedicating time to just do it. Whether your paper piles are at the office (invoices, client information, memos, research) or at home (bills, receipts, magazines, family documents), setting regular and consistent times to sort through papers is key. Once you set up an efficient, effective filing system (ask your professional organizer for assistance!), ten to 30 minutes of daily paper management is all you'll need. Depending upon your personality, decide when to schedule it:

- First thing in the morning: It's a nice start to the day and helps you prioritize today's tasks.
- At the end of the day: This gives you closure and lets you jump right into action the next day.
- Immediately as papers enter your home or office: This is good for those who just want to get it done ASAP.

If you set aside this little bit of time each day, you'll never wind up with huge paper mountains to tackle. However, you'll still need to schedule a "mega-manage" once or twice a year. This is the time to peruse your current filing system, tossing old documents and entire files you'll never need. For example, at home, you might want to toss outdated appliance and software manuals, old receipts, and catalogs and magazines more than one year old. At work, you'll want to consider tossing multiple versions of reports (just save the final copy), old research materials, unimportant memos, and projects that never materialized. This purge will provide breathing room in your filing cabinet and make it easier to retrieve and insert new papers.

Elizabeth Bowman is a professional organizer and the president of Innovatively Organized, a professional organizing services company. She has a passion to help busy professionals streamline their homes, work spaces, and schedules.

Visit www.InnovativelyOrganized.com for more information. You may also contact Elizabeth directly at 206.369.8853 or elizabeth@innovativelyorganized.com.

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