

Organizing Your Home with a Few Quick Tips

Taken from Sharon's book: *A Woman's Secret to a Balanced Life*

The Inspection Tour

You've heard the saying, "Everything in its place and a place for everything." Well if everything is in its place but I can't get to it easily, it's not in a good place. In order to get organized, we need to take an inspection tour to see just how well our home is working for us. My father was a builder and I remember one of his most dreaded days, the walk through. This is when he and the new owners went from room to room in a newly constructed house that was near completion, with a clipboard and pen, making a punch list of all the little items that were incomplete or needed attention. It was his job to see that the list was completed to the owner's satisfaction. In organizing your home, I suggest taking an inspection tour and creating a punch list of your own. Now that you've cleared out the clutter and can see the floors and the furniture again, you're ready to do some organizing. Set aside about thirty minutes to one hour on a day when you aren't going to have any other distractions. Grab a pad of paper and a pen and begin your tour. Walk in your front door and take notes. What do your guests see when they walk in your home? Is it warm and inviting? Then go from room to room asking yourself the following questions:

1. What is the function of this room?

What do we like to do here?

How can we improve its function and allow it to meet our needs more efficiently?

Are there items that we don't need in here at all or that belong in another room?

Are there any areas where clutter consistently piles up? Do those items need a logical place to rest, such as a desk, a clear plastic storage container stowed under the bed, an extra shelf in a closet?

Example: Mary didn't have a desk or worktable in her house. As a result, both of her bedroom nightstands ended up covered with notes, pens, pencils, books etc. She eventually remodeled her kitchen and had a desk built in. The desk took care of the clutter in other areas.

2. Am I seeing anything that is unsightly that needs to be kept out of view?

Example: In the kitchen, are there scouring pads, dingy washcloths, or soggy soap bars that are detracting? Consider storing such items in a pretty pottery jar and try to keep all cleaning utensils and products out of sight.

3. What do I notice first when I enter the room? What kind of impression does it give me? What causes it and what can I do to change it if I don't like it?

Example: Visitors tend to enter my house through my garage door instead of the warm and inviting front or side porch door. The garage entrance was always dirty from handprints, filthy tennis shoes, and my dog that slept at the top of the steps keeping the wall and door grungy. Instead of trying to teach old dogs (and people) new tricks to keep the area clean, I painted the door red with a glossy, washable paint, painted a dog house on the wall where Ginger slept, and placed a cheery chalkboard on the wall to write messages. All this added up to "Welcome!"

Tackling the Punch List

Now that you've eliminated clutter and made a list of changes you'd like to make, go back and pick a room you'd like to get organized. For example, let's pick the den. Once again, start by asking some vital questions.

Organizing Your Den

- What do you like to do there? Read talk, watch TV, listen to music, take naps on the couch, play board games
- Read: Have a comfortable chair with good soft lighting. Place a basket by the chair for magazines or a coffee table for books to prevent clutter from piling up.
- Watch TV: Hide the TV or stereo in a cabinet if possible. Store videos near the VCR, undercover.
- Nap: Place a comfy afghan or quilt over the couch.
- Play games: Keep games stored away in a cabinet. (In our home, when Steven was young, we kept his toys in an old refinished cabinet in the den. It was his

responsibility to put his toys away each day. Now that we are out of the toy stage, we keep games in the same cabinet. The way you organize a room will change with the changing needs of your family.

- After you have decided how your family uses the room and what you need to meet those needs, look around and see if there are any items that are superfluous that need to be moved to another area of the house?

Organizing Your Kitchen

Oh, the den is easy, you say, but what about the kitchen? Of all the rooms in the house, it is the kitchen that needs to be the most efficient.

- One basic rule of thumb for any room in the house, especially the kitchen, is this: Give the handiest, prime space only to those items you use on a regular basis.
- Keep items that you use often close to the area in which they are used: Glasses near the sink or refrigerator, pots near the stove, pans near or under the oven, plates near the table, silverware near the plates, cooking utensils near the stove, spices near the stove.
- Keep small appliances, such as the coffee maker and electric can opener on the counter or on a front shelf in the cupboard. If they are on the counter, make sure they are clean and not detracting.
- Strive to keep as much counter space clear as possible to create an effective workspace.
- Use your highest and lowest cupboard shelves for storage of things you use less often. Put items you rarely use toward the back. If you haven't used something in five years, consider giving or throwing it away.
- Store spices on a lazy Susan or on the shelf in alphabetical order in rows, with the larger items stacked in the back.
- Items you use everyday should be within arm's reach. If you need a step stool to get to something daily, it needs to be move to a more accessible location.
- Clean out that drawer crammed with loose cooking utensils.
- Place the cookies cutters in a plastic bag.

- Throw away unused duplicates (Do you have six sets of place mats, but use only two? Get rid of the other four.)
- If you have to push other items out of the way to find what you need, there's too much in the drawer. Purchase plastic dividers, place large utensils in a pretty crock.
- Cluster can goods in categories on the shelf: vegetable, fruits, soups, cereals, baking supplies, etc. When restocking supplies, maintain the clusters in order to be able to locate foods quickly and easily.

I feel like the writer of Hebrews 11:32 who began listing the great men and women of the faith, "And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises," What shall I say then, for time will fail me if I speak of organizing the bedroom, bathroom, closets and garage! But these ideas give you a good start.