CHADD's National Resource Center on ADHD

ADHD Quick Facts
Organizing Your Home and Office

Getting and staying organized is a real challenge for many adults with ADHD. The pandemic has moved workplaces and schools into our homes, along with recreation and downtime. Organizing your living space to meet these needs can help improve your ability to function in the current environment.

Get motivated and keep going

Rewards can help motivate you to get organized. Before starting, select a reward to give yourself when you've finished. When you're done, make sure you give yourself the reward.

Getting a friend to help you can make the job easier and go faster. Some people find that a video call with someone who is also organizing helps them both stay on task. You can also use websites and apps with features that allow you to make specific commitments to organize a space. Another simple option is to share with your friends on social media that you're taking time to organize and promise to share a picture or a description of your accomplishment afterward.

Some people find a timer or music helpful. The timer can be set for 15-minute increments, with breaks in between. Another popular strategy is to put on a favorite playlist, begin organizing, and keep working until the playlist finishes.

Start with the easiest space first

Estimate how long it might take to organize the easiest space. If the estimate is off, add more time later.

Divide the estimated time into several short work sessions: 10-15 minutes for short bursts or 30-60 minutes for a more sustained approach. Schedule enough short organizing sessions to complete the task by your target date, making adjustments as needed.

Divide your space into sections or centers

> **Quartering:** Divide the space into quarters visually or by marking it off with masking tape or string.
>
> **Around the Clock:** Divide the room like a clock. Work your way around the room systematically, organizing the area at 1:00, 2:00, 3:00 and so on until you return to where you started. Tackle one or two "hours" of the clock during each organizing session.

An effective strategy for getting organized

1. Decide on the reward or motivation to encourage the completion of each step.
2. Select the spaces to be organized.
3. List them in order from easiest to most difficult.
4. Start with the easiest space.
5. Schedule time to work on it.
6. Divide the space into sections.
7. Work on one section at a time until it is finished.

Resources for Organizing

FlyLady: Help Getting Your Home Organized

Organise My House

Tips for Organizing Your Home

Ask the Expert Webinar: Getting Organized When You Have ADHD

CHADD
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
4221 Forbes Blvd, Suite 270
Lanham, MD 20706
www.CHADD.org | 301-306-7070

Zones: Organize the sections of the room by function. For example, to organize your home office, collect everything needed for office work in one spot or corner of the room.

Organizing your workspace

An office or a separate workspace in a larger room can be organized into zones:

Desk space: computer, printer, office supplies, and in/out box for active use papers and bills.

Paperwork storage: file cabinets with financial records, bills, extra checks, bank books and calculator. If also working from home, this may include active files and notebooks.

Reading spot: a comfortable chair with good lighting, a table by the side of the chair, and bookcases. A plug to recharge tablets or cellphones can also be included here.

Rearrange furniture if necessary to form your zones.

Systematically work on each section:

- Gather everything you need to do the job (boxes, garbage bags, masking tape, markers, pencil and paper, cleaning supplies, labels). Set your timer or start the music. Start with three boxes and a trash bag. Label the boxes “keep,” “store” or “not sure.” A possible fourth bag or box would be “donate.”
- Pick up an item and decide which box or bag it belongs in. Don’t take a lot of time with each item. Continue going through items until everything in the section has been sorted or the timer has gone off or playlist has ended. Then, stop for the day. Take out the trash and put stray items in the rooms where they belong.
- Leave the “store” box in the room until you have finished sorting everything there. Then, close up the box and write a future date three to six months away on the side. Mark the reopen date in your paper or digital day planner. Place the box in a storage area. When you do review the contents, you can decide to keep, toss, or donate what’s inside.
- At the end of each organizing session, give yourself your planned reward.

Finish organizing the space:

- Repeat the steps for organizing each section until you have finished the space. Congratulate yourself and treat yourself to a large reward.
- Move on to the next item on the list of spaces to be organized and follow the steps outlined above.
- Continue to follow these steps until all the spaces on your list have been organized.

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