

## Organizing Your Home Office and Paperwork

Organizing your home office can truly be a hair raising task! By home office, I mean any area of your house which you pay bills in, write notes, send cards, store paperwork, etc. Some people are lucky to have a separate room for this purpose, and others section off an area in a room with perhaps just a desk. Either way, this article will deal with organizing this area of your life.

When organizing your home office, the first and foremost priority is going to be all that paperwork. The worst thing that has happened to me is when looking for a bill, a phone number, or important information...I just can't find it! Even though I know that it HAS to be in there....somewhere.

There are several different ways to organize your important bills, paperwork, and documents. I suggest you choose the one that best fits your budget and your lifestyle.

The first method is perhaps the easiest method. I call it the file-away billboard method. First you will need to get your hands on a filing cabinet. What size depends on the amount on paperwork you intend to store - I myself have a 4 drawer metal cabinet since I have a large amount of papers that need to be kept straightened out. Next, label the drawers. If you have a 2 drawer you may wish to simply label the top drawer "bills" and the bottom drawer "documents". If you have a 4 drawer, you can include "extremely important" and "misc." to the list. If possible make sure the cabinet drawers support hanging folders, if not, then you can cheaply purchase a hanging file folder "frame" to support those. Next purchase at least one box of hanging file folders. Label each folder as specifically as you can. Here are some suggestions:

### IN THE BILLS DRAWER:

- Unpaid Bills (put each bill you get in the mail in this folder so you will know exactly what needs to be paid. Put each bill in its own folder as soon as you pay it, and write on the stub when it was paid and the check number. That way you can look back for easy reference if you need to. - Cable Bill/Paid - Water Bill/Paid - Electric Bill/Paid - Mortgage Bill/Paid - Telephone/Paid - Child Care/Paid - Columbia House/Paid - Misc./Paid (this one is for those once only bills that won't get enough to have their own folder)

### IN THE DOCUMENTS DRAWER

Note: Those marked with an \* are those which could be filed in "important" if you had an extra drawer. - House papers\* (to keep all the mortgage or lease papers together) - Medical Insurance\* (you can keep separate insurance files for each covered family member) - Receipts\* - Warranties\* - Recipes - Useful URLs - Car/Auto Documents\* (loan agreements, titles, maintenance records can be kept here) - Misc Important\* (for those that wouldn't fit a specific category) - Bank Statements\* - Computer Papers/Instructions

Of course you can make any folders to whatever applies to you. I find this to be the easiest and fastest way to get organized with paperwork, if not the least expensive. I also recommend buying a medium to large size bulletin board and putting all of the most important things on there that you always forget you have. Things like important phone number, coupons, reminders, and more can go there easily. It is also a great place to hang children's artwork if you have small children.

The next method is a little less efficient, but can work wonders for those on a tight budget. First get several medium to small size boxes that have separate lids, and either get several yards of fabric, or you can even use old clothes with interesting patterns. Get a hold of some fabric glue (the best kind to use is the spray kind). Then cut the fabric to cover the outside of the box, and also the lid. Glue the fabric to the boxes securely, and let dry. Then using 3X5 cards, label each box as needed.

Examples:

"UNPAID BILLS" "PAID BILLS" "MISC" "TO DO" "IMPORTANT PAPERS"

I have created several very pretty floral boxes using this method, and you can even add pictures of loved ones, pictures cut from magazines, sequins, or anything else you can think of. The stack the boxes, and add papers to their respective boxes as needed. Simple and effective!

Another good thing to use when organizing your papers are folders, as in the kind kids use in school, with a pocket on each side. They come in many different styles, and can be useful in keeping together slips of information, and things you need to put away but do not yet have the time. I personally always keep a plastic tray on my desk for "papers that need to be put away", either in boxes or file cabinet drawers, so that I can put them a way when

I have a spare moment, yet they won't get lost.

It is always good to keep several plain boxes in your basement or storage area, and label them by year (i.e. "1997" "1998" "1999" "2000",ect.), and at the end of each year, go through where you keep your paid bills and receipts, and place every each in the box for the prior year. That way your box or file cabinet won't get stuffed full, and yet you will have these items on hand in case of an audit or other dispute.

I hope these home office tips help you, and it is always best to think of your home office just as you would a business office. Pretend you are the secretary keeping things in place to run a business, and you will never go wrong.

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#### About the Author

Stephanie Davies is a 27 year old Missourian with a loving husband and an 8 year old son. She currently owns and operates her own business, Mystickal Incense & More, which sells handmade candles, incense, bath & body products and other handcrafted products at <http://www.mystickalincense.com>