

# MONEYWISE

## VALUING PEOPLE. VALUING MONEY.

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Nichole Huff, Ph.D., CFLE | Assistant Extension Professor Family Finance and Resource Management | nichole.huff@uky.edu

### THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: SAVING MONEY WHILE ORGANIZING

A new year can bring inspiration, encourage goal setting, and motivate you to “get organized.” Being organized and in control of our “stuff” can promote productivity and reduce anxiety. Although getting and staying organized takes effort, it does not need to take much money to achieve. There are many ways to create order on a budget.

**Declutter BEFORE “organizing.”** We can’t – and shouldn’t try to – organize clutter. Clutter is the “stuff” that does not belong anywhere. It is the stuff we don’t really like or use, so we never end up giving it a proper place in our space. Therefore, before you buy those cute containers you see online, make sure you’re “containing” things you actually use or want to keep. You’ll need fewer organizing products when you have less stuff.

#### Sort swiftly and graciously give away.

Decluttering is easier when you sort like items – this way you can see how many of each thing you have. (Do you really need *three* can openers?) You may choose to go drawer by drawer, room by room, or gather all like items in one spot. Toss broken and worn-out items and donate the rest to a local charity. If you are set on selling



your unwanted items, keep in mind that something is only worth what another person will pay for it.

**Work with your space.** Deciding *where* to keep your things does not cost anything. Establish “zones” for things in places where you would naturally look for them. Keep the phrase **“visible and accessible”** in mind. This does not mean all your things need to be kept out on the counter. Rather, when you are searching in your closets, cabinets, or drawers, will you be able to see and find things? And will you be able to easily reach things? Will special containers or organizing products help or hinder?

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## ITEMS LOOK LESS LIKE CLUTTER WHEN THEY ARE ON A TRAY OR IN A BASKET



**Think “inside the box.”** Before you invest in color-coordinated crates or space-specific storage to organize your belongings, try repurposing bins and other containers you may already have. Cereal or tissue boxes and jars are great for sorting and storing. Or use a favorite plate or bowl to hold frequently used items. (*Hint: Items look less like clutter when they are on a tray or in a basket.*) Try to use your “homemade” containers first to see if you like the way a space functions.

**Choose the same kind of container or label.** If you decide to purchase special organizing products, try to select multi-purpose containers that can be used in various spaces. Having containers that match and come in different sizes creates a cohesive look. Your storage needs may change over time, so containers that offer flexibility will maintain their usefulness. To make containers of all styles, colors, and sizes look neat and uniform, mark them with matching labels. This is an easy, low-cost way to coordinate the containers you already have.

**Invite a friend to help.** Sure, hiring a “professional organizer” can get the job done for a price, but a close friend can also give you honest advice about what to keep and what to part with. Swap roles and help your friend when they are ready to declutter.

**Clutter has a “cost.”** Going forward, remember to consider the “cost” of bringing an item into your home or keeping something “just in case.” Most everything we own takes time to clean or maintain. Too many items taking up limited space creates physical and mental obstacles that prevent us from having or doing more meaningful things. Additionally, having clutter makes it hard to find things when we need them. Sometimes we might buy more of an item because we can’t locate what we already own. That is why being organized can save you time and money.

Written by Jeanne Badgett, Senior Extension Associate

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