Get Organized the Easy Way, With Printables

Whether you're heading back to school, planning your work week, managing a household – or even all three, you'll find that you experience less stress if you become more organized. "Getting organized" may seem like a broad and daunting task. But it doesn't have to be. With the investment of a little time spent in organizing your life, you can reap big rewards in productivity, time savings, and in achieving the coveted "work-life balance." This Get Organized Pack, with more than two dozen convenient printables, will help.

The pack is a "sampler" of sorts from FreePrintable.net, a family of more than 70 Web sites offering free and low-cost printables for home, school, and business use. These calendars, planners, to-do lists, budgets, note-taking paper and other printables were hand-picked to help you get a jump-start on becoming better-organized.

Whatever you do, don't feel overwhelmed! Use only the printables that you need and that work with your lifestyle and situation. Like anything in life, success usually takes "baby steps," and you want less stress in your life, not more!

Calendars

One of the first steps to getting a handle on all the things you need and want to do in your life is with an easy-to-read calendar. The Get Organized Pack includes monthly 2011 calendars in both PDF and .DOC versions. The .DOC files can be opened and edited in Microsoft Word, which means you can customize them to match the needs of your family, business, or classroom.

For example, to add birthdays, more holidays, vacations, and other special events, just open the Word document, click near the bottom of a date square, and start typing. The calendars are already formatted to display these daily notes in distinctive blue text. (In fact, by choosing Styles and Formatting from the Format menu and tweaking the existing text, you can change fonts and colors and make other changes to the .DOC template.)

Once the calendar is customized the way you like it, print it out. Better yet, also print copies for your spouse, kids, coworkers or anyone else who needs to know important plans and dates.

Planners

For more detailed planning of your family and business lives, make use of the Monthly_Planner, Weekly_Planner, or the datebook-sized Weekly_Planner_Pages.

The full-size monthly and weekly planner pages are ready to print out and either hole-punch and put in a binder or simply use as-is. Simply write anything time-sensitive on the appropriate day and do it! It's best not to clutter up your calendar or planner with tasks that aren't time-sensitive, as it tends to dilute or distract you from the things that really must be done during that time period. Save personal goals and longer-term tasks for to-do lists and note paper.

There's also a detailed daily Appointment_Book with the ability to schedule weekday events in 15-minute increments. Using the appointment book to organize your day should cut back on wasted time, double-booked (or forgotten!) appointments and other "time bandits" that keep you from living the best, most productive life you can. Be sure to "schedule" time for yourself! Studies show that people who take time for their own pleasurable pursuits are ultimately more productive in other areas of their lives.

Note-taking Paper

If you will be taking notes in class, meetings, or anytime, you'll want to print out several copies of the lined paper of your choice from the Get Organized Pack. Having printable paper on-the-ready saves you a trip to the store. It also means you can get started on a project right away!

The Get Organized Pack includes several variations of the popular lined papers from PrintablePaper.net, as well as two styles of graph paper. There is the standard college rule paper as well as popular "specialty" paper.

Experienced note-takers love Cornell note paper. It's formatted with lines for notes, but also two large blank areas for a "cue" and summary. In the Cornell method, initial note-taking is done on the lines, while the Cues area is used later, to note and review main ideas, ask questions, or even draw diagrams.

Another option is law-ruled paper, which has a very wide margin at the left so you can, essentially, take notes on your notes!

Other people, especially scientific-minded and artist types, like to organize their thoughts on grid (graph) paper. There are two versions included in the Get Organized Pack. Graph paper is also great when you want to redesign a room as well as for crafting and hobbies.

You may find that just having a stack of your favorite note paper (whether it's grid paper or Cornell Notes or one of the to-do lists) helps you to be on track and productive.

Budgets

Even if your personal time and appointments are well organized, you may still be struggling to get a clear picture of your finances and make needed adjustments to your spending. Creating a realistic daily or weekly budget is an important step.

Sit down with a pencil (you may need to erase if you make adjustments), a stack of old bills and a copy of the Weekly_Budget or Monthly_Budget. Then, record your income and fixed expenses and plan your discretional spending. If you have a target down on paper, it's a lot easier to get a handle on the money you have coming in and going out. Also, you'll catch those little "leaks" (the $4 lattes) that really add up.

If you like taking a more free-form approach to tracking your income and spending, try writing your own spending categories and other details down on the columnar paper. The columnar paper, also known as finance paper, has some columns shaded in green and is very user-friendly.

Perhaps you've tried in the past to keep control over your finances by using a financial management software such as Quicken, or online money management tools like those found on Mint.com or Wesabe. The trouble is, if you wait a few days to input your spending data, receipts get lost, you forget what you bought, and you quickly get discouraged.

One solution is to carry some Daily_Spending sheets with you. (There are four per page, so you can cut them apart.) Then, when you're on the go, just

jot down how much you spent, for what. Then you can compile the data at your leisure.

To Do Lists

Professional organizers agree that getting something out of your head and onto paper (or a system of your choice) is the first step to being not only organized but productive as well. When everything is down in black-and-white, it's much easier to choose what to work on next, which eliminates wasted time and energy.

It doesn't matter whether you prefer an online to-do list or good, old-fashioned paper. The key is to get things done. (In fact, there's an entire movement about productivity and workflow called Getting Things Done, or GTD).

Staying organized and getting things done doesn't have to be complicated. Just make a list! Your list could go by days of the week, just one day at a time, or whatever works for you. Take a look at Daily_To_Do_List. It's best to use this list for things you truly need to get done on that day. Otherwise, your true priorities won't be as clear, and you'll also find yourself rewriting the same list again the following day, again cluttering it up with less-urgent tasks!

Many people find it helpful to list the things they need to do in priority order, as is possible with the Priority_Checklist_To_Do_List. To keep your lists manageable, consider the "do, delegate, defer" method. If something on your list can be done in a minute or two, such as e-mailing someone, just go ahead and do it. Some tasks could be passed along to another person. And when you "defer" a task, try not to be vague. If possible, also note the "action" you need to take to get it done. (For example, "bake sale" becomes "order cupcakes for bake sale.") Another "D" alternative might be to "dimiss." Maybe there are some things you can simply decide not to do and get it off your list—and your conscience!—once and for all.

You could also make multiple lists: one for home and family, one for work, etc. You might also have lists that aren't immediately actionable, such as personal goals. A separate list allows you to list those and plan the steps needed to achieve them.

If you're especially visual, or just like the feeling of being able to see something that needs done, do it, and cross it off the list, take a cue from parents and teachers and make yourself a Chore_Chart. Just list the top five recurring tasks you want to be sure to complete each day of the week, and X the boxes on the days you do so.

Miscellaneous Lists

A common time-waster is the Case of the Lost Grocery List. You know you made a list, but where did that little scrap of paper go? Even worse, you get home from the store only to realize you forgot milk, toothpaste, and the eggs you needed to make those brownies for tomorrow's party. This is where a few minutes of planning save the day.

Before you make a trip to the market, print out the Blank_Grocery_Lists. There are two on each sheet, so just cut or tear them apart and you're good to go! Write what you need on the lines and check off the convenient boxes as you snag them into your shopping cart.

Some of the most organized people are those who plan their meals out several days, or even a week or more, in advance. The Get Organized Pack includes a combination Weekly_Menu_Planner_With_Grocery_List. There are spots for each day of the week as well as a categorized shopping list. Shopping with specific meals in mind means fewer ingredients wasted due to spoilage as well as money saved when you buy just what's on the list.

Finally, there's a Password_List. It's a convenient, one-stop location to write down all the usernames and passwords to the Web sites you frequent as well as email accounts. By keeping this list, you won't find yourself hunting around frantically for lost passwords. But be sure to keep the list in a safe place! You don't want to lose it, or, even worse, have the wrong person come across it.

That's it! We hope you enjoy this Get Organized Pack. Please continue to visit FreePrintable.net for more great printables. Have fun and be organized!