



**31 tips**  
to simplify  
your life!

*"Organizing isn't just self-control or determination.  
It's a skill anyone can learn and it becomes  
a positive way of living."  
- Elizabeth Hagen*



**ELIZABETH HAGEN**

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

## 1. Clutter Part 1

Chaos is contagious. The solution is to have a place for everything and form the habit of putting things away where they belong. This means going through and getting rid of what you don't need. Know that this process does not take 5 minutes – it may take a lot of time and work but the benefits are huge and the end result is peace of mind.

## 2. Clutter Part 2

In the words of Henry David Thoreau – “Simplify, simplify, simplify.” The less you have the harder it is to generate clutter. When you are shopping get real picky. Only bring items into your home that you know to be useful, think to be beautiful, or love. When you stick to this guideline your home will be a place of rest and peace.

## 3. Clutter Part 3

Overwhelmed by the clutter? Just pick one area to start with. If it's your to-do list, prioritize the items. If it's your office, start with the papers on top of the desk, then the drawers, and then the file cabinet. If it's your kitchen just start with one drawer. Set a timer for 10 minutes and take ACTION.

## 4. Planning

It's impossible to think we have time to do all that we think we have to. This is where prioritization is a key. Write down all you think you need to do and then prioritize by A, B, C. A's are things you MUST do, B's are things that you SHOULD do, and C's are things that are NICE to do. Then, never do a B or C unless the A's are done.

## 5. Goals

The fastest way to make changes in your life is to set goals. If you don't set goals how will you know where you're going? Set goals using the START method – make them **Specific**, **Timely**, have **Action** steps, be **Realistic**, and be **True** for you. Write them down in the positive as if they've already happened and look at them 3x every day.

## 6. Saying No

Learn to say no. You will achieve nothing if you try to do everything. Be daring and say no to all those things that you really don't want to do. Saying no to the good things leaves room in your life for the GREAT things. If you have trouble saying no - simply answer with this – I have a conflict. That's all you need to say.

## 7. Toss

Use these questions to decide to keep or toss:

- Have I used it in the past year?
- Is it serving a specific purpose?
- Do I still like it?
- Is there a legal reason for keeping it?
- Do I have a place to store it where I will find it again?

And the most important one:

- If I would get rid of it and need it again someday what is the worst thing that would happen to me?

## 8. Planning for the Week

Get in the habit of having a set time each week to look over the week's activities and plan your menus. Sit down with my grocery list/menu planner which you can get for free on my website under Free Resources. As you fill in the menu for the week check and see if you have the ingredients in your kitchen. When you know what's for supper in the morning the whole day goes better!

## 9. Calendar

Do you frequently miss appointments and due dates? Perhaps you are using more than one calendar. When you have more than one you can not depend on any of the calendars so you probably stop using the calendar all together. Use one calendar and one calendar only. As soon as you see an item that needs to be on the calendar – write it down.

## 10. Errands

Keep a small spiral notebook near you at all times. Any time you think of something you need to get or do when you're out write it in the notebook. When you have time to run errands look over everything in the notebook and plan your trip accordingly. It's fun and just plain feels good to cross off items as you accomplish them.

## 11. Paper Part 1

When was the last time you saw your kitchen counter? Chances are it's covered in paper and maybe your kitchen table, too. Read the article on my website under Free Resources called “Create a Customized Office/Household Command Center” to help you take care of all. Never forget cupcakes for your child's Valentine party again.

## 12. Paper Part 2

Use the 5F plan to never pile again:

- Papers that need no further action are **Finished** – file or toss.
- Papers that take 2 minutes or less are **Fast** – just do it.
- Papers that someone else can do are **For Others**.
- Papers that need action taken in the future are **Future Short Term** and belong in your Command Center.
- Papers that are part of a project are **Future Long Term** and belong in a designated part of your filing cabinet.

To get your own 5f Plan Flyer go to:

[www.ElizabethHagen.com/pdf/5f.pdf](http://www.ElizabethHagen.com/pdf/5f.pdf)

## 13. Mail

Since 1/3 of the mail we get is junk open your mail over the trash can or recycle bin. Don't keep what you don't need. Open the bills and throw out the inserts. Enter dates into your calendar right away. Make the habit each day of throwing the newspaper in the recycle bin before bringing in the new paper.

## 14. Magazines Part 1

Use the rip-and-read technique when looking at magazines. The first time through rip out articles that are of interest and staple. Put in your To Read Folder in your Command Center and the next time you're traveling or going to the doctor's office take your To Read folder with you. Throw it away when you're done or pass on to someone else.

## 15. Magazines Part 2

Designate a basket for the magazines that come into your home. Have the rule that when the basket is full no new magazines are added unless some in the basket are given away or discarded. If you don't have time to read the magazines that come each month cancel your subscriptions. You will survive!

## 16. Messages

Does your family answer the phone and you never get the messages? Would you like a central place for the family to leave messages to each other? Create a Family Message Center. Purchase a white board and attach it to your kitchen cupboard or wall and make sure it is right by the phone. Get in the habit of checking it first thing when you come in and last thing before you leave home.

## 17. Kitchen

When you organize your kitchen and start putting items back in the cupboards – think 1, 2, & 3. 1's are items you use daily and should be put lower in the cupboards and closer toward you. 2's are items you use weekly and can be put a little further up and farther back in the cabinets, and 3's are items used monthly or seasonally. They can be put WAY up high or not even stored in your kitchen.

## 18. Meals

Prepare a whole week's worth of food on Saturdays. Then, you'll just have to heat up your pre-made meals during the week. This is a great idea if you want a healthy meal, but get home too late from work to cook. If you're really ambitious – cook enough for a month! Don't forget to use your crock pot, also, to make an easy meal.

## 19. Bedroom

It only takes a minute to make your bed right after you get up in the morning and will make the whole room look more organized instantly. Only keep the book you're reading right now on your nightstand. Store all others in a bookcase or storage bin. And form the habit of throwing clothes in the hamper immediately and your bedroom will be a place of rest, not chaos.

## 20. Closets Part 1

Ladies – we only wear 20% of what's in our closet. That means that 80% is just sitting there. If you want to truly organize your closet get in a very ruthless frame of mind and take EVERYTHING out of the closet. Try everything on and only put back what fits and you like. If it doesn't fit give it away or put in a bin but DO NOT put back in your closet.

## 21. Closets Part 2

Try on all the clothes in your closet. The rule of thumb is "How do you feel when you try it on?" - not "if you haven't worn it in a year get rid of it". If you feel pretty and happy – keep it – if you feel drained and exhausted when you look in the mirror – give it away.

## 22. Closets Part 3

Organize your closet by articles of clothing. All pants together, skirts together, blouses together. Then color code within each group hanging light to dark. You can then see at a glance how many black pants you have and know that no matter how good the sale is on black pants – you don't need anymore.

## 23. Cleaning

There are a ton of cleaning products out there. You can minimize what you have by purchasing an all-in-one cleaner. Use a caddy with a handle to carry around your cleansers, furniture polish and cleaning rags. Keep cleaners under each bathroom sink and get in the habit of wiping out the sink and cleaning the mirror each morning.

## 24. Laundry

Place a laundry bag on the back of each bedroom closet door for each family member. Then, have it be their responsibility to deliver their full bag to the laundry room when needed. Have a laundry sorter with 2-3 compartments by the washer to make sorting a breeze. Have the family take turns to help with the washing, drying, folding and ironing.

## 25. Games

Sit down with the children and take out all the board games and card games that you own. Find out which ones the children like to play, which ones have all the pieces, and get rid of the rest. If necessary tape up the boxes or put all the game boards in a bin and all the different game pieces in zip lock bags and label them.

## 26. Toys

Use baskets and bins for the different types of toys. One for Barbies, Barbies' clothes, hot wheel cars, legos, and be sure and label the bins. If your child is young print graphics off the computer and tape to the bin. Use the one-in-one-out rule with your children's toys. When they have a birthday and receive 8 gifts have them go through their toys and give 8 items to a charity.

## 27. Gifts

A lot of clutter is caused by gift giving. Start giving gift certificates that don't cause clutter – movie tickets, dinner certificates, zoo passes, a day at a spa, or a membership to an event center. A gift of time is a great idea, too. Also, next time you're in a card shop pick up a variety of cards to have on hand.

## 28. Garage

Believe it or not the purpose of a garage is to park a car. Keep everything up as much as possible. Install peg boards to hang items. Get garbage bins for all the sports balls, another one for fishing poles. Get shelving with labeled bins for all the different toys. Install bike hooks or racks for the bicycles.

## 29. E-Mail

Take the time to go through your e-mail in box. It should be empty on a regular basis. Set up folders for e-mails that you want to refer to later. Use the junk mail feature to automatically send unwanted e-mail to the junk folder. If an e-mail takes 2 minutes or less to respond to – take care of it when you get it. If it takes longer move it to your follow-up folder.

## 30. Procrastination

Find yourself procrastinating? Take index cards and on one write down the end result. On the others write down one step on each card. After you have all the steps to accomplish the project on cards put them in a logical order. You can now take action and tackle the project, card by card.

## 31. Staying Organized

Appoint one day a month as Organizing Day. Put it on your calendar as an appointment. On this day make an effort to pick one area and work at it until it's done. Maybe it's your makeup drawer, the garage, toy room, junk drawer, or hall closet. Take away donated items that day. You will feel so good and have such momentum you'll want to keep going!



**Elizabeth Hagen**  
Speaker/Author/Coach

**It all started with keeping up with the demands of raising five children, supporting her husband in his chiropractic career, and building her own business. Now a speaker, author, and business coach, Elizabeth has spent over 30 years developing the common sense systems and tools that encourage people to become more focused and have more control, more momentum, and more success.**

**Her book, *Organize with Confidence*, is the outcome of her commitment to organization as a path to a better life.**

[www.ElizabethHagen.com](http://www.ElizabethHagen.com)  
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