

# Ask the Experts: How to Organize Your Home



**Is it time to organize your house? Our two experts will make it easy and even fun, believe it or not!**

You know something is wrong when you can only find certain items in your home when it is unorganized. We've all been there where we clean our house and tidy up and can't find anything. It doesn't have to be like that. You can have an organized home and still find everything you need. We talked to two experts, Karen Duncan, a certified professional organizer and Randy Wickstrom, a professional organizer of Purple Durple Organizers, and they are here to help guide you while you organize your home. Because let's face it, sometimes we just need to bring in a professional.

## **The Messiest Rooms in the House**

The top three problem areas are the garage/basement, the kid's room and the home office (with more people working from home, keeping their home office organized is the number one challenge most people encounter), Wickstrom says. "The major reason people want to get organized is a symptom I like to call 'paper-pile-tinitis,' a tongue-in-cheek term I use to describe the piles of paper most people have cluttering up their home office."

The challenge most people have with paper is indecision, procrastination and the feeling they need to keep it. Wickstrom says that most, if not all, paper based information can be kept electronically. "Storing

and accessing information via the internet or scanning it into your computer is a great way to reduce the amount of paper cluttering up a home office."

Practice Wickstrom's R.A.T. principle: Read it and act on it, then toss it or file it.

Duncan also says that garages and home offices seem to be the most unorganized places. Many garages end up being cluttered because items accumulate over time or because decisions about what to do with them are not made. She adds that many people do not have designated areas for the items they store in their garages such as sports equipment and yard tools.

For the office, "If there are no systems in place, papers tend to pile up and overtake living spaces," she says.

## Where Do You Even Start?

"The first step is to decide what you want to organize and why," Wickstrom says. "I suggest starting with an area of your home you're most frustrated with or where you spend the majority of your time." Then, start small. Schedule no longer than 30 minutes at a time to prevent burnout and focus on one small area at a time until it's completed.

Duncan says assess and make decisions about what you have. A big part of being organized is dealing with the quantity and volume of items that fit in your space. "When sorting, it is critical to identify what is CURRENTLY important to you and to be honest with yourself in making that assessment." Duncan does not advocate throwing everything away, but if you do not have the space and an item is no longer important to you, then it may be time to purge it. You can donate items to charity, give them to friends or family or sell them at yard sales or consignment shops.

## Wickstrom's Tips for Organizing Your Home

- **One thing in, one thing out rule:** Purging and reducing items helps eliminate clutter and helps keep you better organized. When you buy a new clothing item, plan on donating an item of clothing you no longer wear to your favorite charity.
- **Control clutter hot spots:** Create a home for incoming mail, papers and magazines that tend to pile up on the kitchen table or entryway table. Designate a decorative basket as an "in-box" to capture all those papers that pile up and clutter these areas. Do the same for car keys, cell phone and work ID and place them in a small decorative container near the entry way.
- **Quick step 10/10 purge:** An easy way to get started is to choose just one room of your home and in 10 minutes or less, quickly identify 10 items you can donate or put into the trash and place them into a trash or recycle bag or donate box and immediately remove them from your home.
- **Containerizing:** Clear plastic mini drawers, decorative baskets and bins are perfect to store flash drives, computer disks and small office accessories.

## Duncan's Tips for Organizing Your Home

- **Think about maintenance:** Think about how much time and effort you can devote to maintaining your home.
- **Give yourself permission to not be perfect:** Remember that each person is unique in their organizational needs.



## Make Organizing Fun

"Enlist the aid of a friend. An objective opinion from a trusted friend helps in making decisions on what to keep and what to toss," Wickstrom says. Family or friends can help or hiring the right professional organizer can be very helpful, Duncan says.



## **More About Randy Wickstrom**

Wickstrom has over 25 years of experience and expertise in hospitality management. He started Purple Durple Organizers in 2005 with the goal of helping people succeed in their daily life. He's also a Golden Circle Member of the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO). To learn more about him and organizing your home, head to his website at [Purple Durple Organizers](#).

## **More About Karen Duncan**

Duncan's team has served hundreds of clients all over the Jacksonville, FL area since 2003. She is a member of the National Association of Professional Organizers' (NAPO) Golden Circle. She has a BS in Engineering and an MBA in Marketing. She's been married for over 20 years and has two teenage daughters. To learn more about her and organization tips for your home, head to her website at [Jacksonville Organizer](#).

[Published in Women's Forum Magazine 6/17/13](#)