



A stress-free workspace

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Can't find where you put the documents you need to send out for your new gig, or the paper to refill the printer? Is your daily agenda buried under piles of CDs and bills? All of this clutter is slowing down how well you function. Laura Leist — president of the National Association of Professional Organizers and an organizing and productivity consultant — helps you get it together.

Double duty

Sometimes home offices do double duty and serve as a guest room. You have to figure out how you want your office to function.

“What do you easily need to get your hands on? How much space can you realistically devote? Start by gathering up like items and make decisions about what to keep and what to let go,” Leist says.

Everyone loves office supplies

“People buy way too much of it! Shop from your inventory first before you go to the of-



Create space

Tips to free up office space:

- » Get rid of all the boxes your software came in and condense it into one little binder of CDs and user manuals.
- » Donate books you've already read and know you're not going to read again.
- » For bank statements, Leist recommends you only keep a year's worth — if you're going to keep them at all. Most of this information you can access online. PS: She doesn't keep hers.

Eliminate paper

“Get into the habit of eliminating paper and information immediately,” Leist says. “It's best if you can make a decision up front whether to keep it or not. And if you do need to keep it, you need to create a structure or system.”

Leist's paper-management system: Four things you should implement in your home office.

- » **Daily Action Center TM:** Keep this close at hand. It could be an inbox or drawer right at your fingertips at your desk. Keep the projects or files that you work on every day here, such as bills to pay, travel information, etc.
- » **Reference system:** This doesn't need to be as close to your desk. It's for all the paperwork you need to hold on to — printed copies of credit card or bank statements, your medical history information, insurance policies.
- » **Operational:** The paperwork it takes to run your business — licenses, tax information, marketing information, etc. This can be stored in a filing cabinet.
- » **Archival:** Examples are your tax returns. You don't need it directly in your workspace.

Laura Leist is the Author of *Eliminate the Chaos at Work: 25 Techniques to Increase Productivity*