

5 Tips on How to Find Your Paperwork... in 30 Seconds or Less By Evelyn Gray

Volumes of information are thrown at us each day, turning us into "information overload zombies" making it difficult to decide what to do with all this information.



What do we mean by "information overload?" It's the information that is either gathered because we have a project to do, newsletters, information sent to us by others or we print it in case we "might" need it later. Whoa! Now WHAT do we do with all this information and HOW do we categorize it?

And do you realize that people spend up to 1 hour a day just looking for stuff (over 6 weeks a year)? It doesn't mean we find it, it just means we're looking for it. Just thinking about how the volume of paperwork is overwhelming, isn't it?

Here are 5 tips that will help you decide how to sort and categorize your paperwork into what we call a "neat mess"™. It's simple. It's easy—once you know how.

1. First, decide what types of information you receive every day: Then make up general category names that you need to take action on: Data Entry, Call Backs (people you've call and are awaiting answers), Meetings ("Meeting Munchies"—make it fun), Follow-up (Gotta Do or Else), Read Later, What Would I Do If I Won the Lotto?, Just for Me, etc. Be sure to keep no more than 7 categories.

2. You might want to color code these files. I find that people relate to "colors" first, "pictures" second, and then "words" last. Decide what colors are best for you.

3. Take each paper and decide if you really need it, can use it now, or you can get it from another source later if you really need it. If you think you might use it later, title a piece of paper called, "Where Did I Put That?" Write the date in the 1st column, the description of the item in the 2nd column, and in the 3rd column, where you'd place that information (a folder in Word or a Bookmark and/or website address, the library or somewhere in your office). Then drop each piece of paper into those categories until you can get to them.

4. For the papers that need follow up right away, put those items in a tickler system and write the date on the upper right hand corner you need to take action on. Put that information into the July Pendaflex hanging file (for instance) or in a Desktop File folder (Jan-December, 1-31) in a desktop plastic container on top of your desk. Then write where you put that paperwork on your paper calendar or input into your electronic calendar. If it's a meeting, you might like to put the information in your tickler system the day before the actual meeting date, so you can gather additional information that you may have forgotten.

5. Now, that's what I call a "neat mess"™. Placing the paperwork into categories into a container or file drawer that's specifically for the purpose of

categorizing the paper that you can easily reference later, is the key to finding your paperwork in 30 seconds or less.

Remember kindergarten? They have "activity zones": Blocks, Reading, etc. As adults, we need to create a working environment that's based on the "kindergarten method" of activity zones based on how we relate to our papers and things, that will help us to become more effective and stress less because we're more organized.

Be creative. Have fun and start turning YOUR "piles into files."

Evelyn Gray is a *Productivity Expert & Organizing Coach; Speaker, Trainer, & Consultant; ADD & Chronic Disorganization Specialist; and Organizing for Success*, as well as our **ADD & Productivity Mentor**. Contact Evelyn at evelyn@evelyngray.com or (626) 576-2059 PST, as well as going www.evelyngray.com where Evelyn can show you how easy it is to create a customized paperwork flow system using the "Body Double and Muttering Technique Success System." **Remember:** *"If you can't find it in 30 seconds, it's in the wrong place"™*