

TWENTY WAYS TO GET SORTED

How do professional organisers stay on top of everything?

We'd all like to be more organised. We'd all like to be that person: the one who never forgets her kids' sunscreen, who pops dinner in the slow cooker before heading to work, whose house never looks like a 'before' picture. So what sets super-organised people apart and how can we steal their tricks? LAUREN SAMS spoke to four of Australia's leading professional organisers: Carol Posener of Get Organised, Clutterfly's Georgie Rees, Chelsea Smith of The Organising Platform and Linda Eagleton of Creative Surrounds.

Write everything down. Carol says that if she doesn't write down her appointments, contacts and reminders, she'll forget them. "Relying on your memory is exhausting!"

Productive days start the night before, says Chelsea. She spends 15–20 minutes at the end of each day tidying the house, cleaning up from dinner, putting toys away, turning the dishwasher on and doing a load of washing overnight.

"When I get up in the morning, I'm not waking up to chaos."

"Set reminders for your appointments. Not only does this help you remember them, but having an electronic record of things like doctor's visits can be helpful down the track," says Georgie. Printing out electronic calendars is helpful, too, as you can then fill available blocks of time with small tasks.

Create folders for your inbox. "I have a folder for each client, for instance, so I don't get confused," says Carol.

Don't multitask. While Carol acknowledges that to-do lists will always grow longer, doing more at once isn't the answer. "Keep chipping away at one task before moving on to the next. You'll be more productive and get more done."

Don't stop working. "If another task comes to mind while you're working, don't stop what you're doing," says Georgie. "Simply write down the thought on a sticky note and get back to work."

Create a home for everything, says Carol. She doesn't buy anything unless she knows where it will go.

Time management is more than just keeping a diary, says Linda. "You also need to factor in how much time it'll take to get to your appointment and back, and ensure you include that in your diary as well."

Share your online calendars to cut down wasted time. Use iCal or Google Calendar to sync your calendars with your partner or people you work closely with.

On that note, shorter bursts of work are better for productivity. Georgie follows the Pomodoro Technique – 25 minutes work, then 5 minutes rest – while Chelsea does 45 minutes of work with a 15 minute break. Choose what works for you.

Tackle tasks when you can. If Linda has 30 minutes to spare, she'll pick a surface that's become a dumping ground and focus on putting everything away. "If you focus, it doesn't actually take too much time."

"Do little things every day to stay on top," says Carol. "Clean your kitchen before you leave for work, put a dishwasher load on before bed."

Got more stuff than you know what to do with? Instead of asking for things for your birthday or Christmas, ask for experiences such as movie vouchers or restaurant bookings.

Delegate if you can't do it yourself. "If your computer isn't working, don't ignore the problem; hire someone to fix it," says Carol.

"Say no. Doing too much is what makes us feel overwhelmed, and then it's impossible to stay organised," says Georgie.

Unpack as soon as you get home, says Carol. Whether it's shopping bags, your handbag, or even your luggage when you come home from a holiday, doing it right away wipes the slate clean.

Have a routine. Chelsea says that a weekly routine — one that's uncomplicated and flexible — will help you plan. "Have a day for groceries, a day for washing your sheets, a day for catching up on 'life admin'. This will also allow you to find blocks of time for exercise, catching up with friends or even sleeping in!"

Write lists. Georgie swears by making to-do lists and shopping lists to stay productive. "Lists help you focus and give you a sense of achievement as you tick things off!"

Declutter — ruthlessly. This is one thing all of our organisers could agree on — regular decluttering is the number one way to stay organised and efficient. "Having only items that you love or that serve a purpose in your home is not only refreshing but it is easier to keep your space neat, tidy and organised," says Chelsea.

Label it. Linda uses labels on everything, not just so that she knows where everything is, but so her family does, too (so they don't have to ask her constantly)!

For more from these expert organisers, head to getorganised.com.au, clutterfly.com.au, theorganisingplatform.com and creativesurrounds.com.au.