

## **The Battle to De-clutter and De-stress: 3 Organizational Methods to Try This Summer**

Summer gives many people the chance to relax and unwind at home – but if “home” is full of clutter, relaxation may be hard to come by.

If you find yourself distracted, distressed, or disorganized by the clutter your home has accumulated over the past year, now is a great time to tackle it. Before you begin your de-cluttering project, however, use these three organizational tips to create a restful summer relaxation space:

### **1. Create “grab it and go” options.**

When summer fun beckons, nobody wants to be scrambling to find snacks, hats, and sunblock – and nobody wants to put away all those things separately when they return from a day at the park or beach. Strike a happy medium between tedious packing and total chaos by creating “grab it and go” options. Store frequently used summer items like your water bottle, sunglasses, hat and sunblock in a tote bag so they’re easy to grab when you want to head out.

For summer activities at home, like swimming, gardening, or playing outside, designate a large box or bin for related items. Bring the bin out when it’s time to play, and have everyone put his or her toys back inside when it’s time to stop. At the end of the season, you can sort, clean, and put away what’s in the bin – or simply pop the lid on and shelve it until next summer.

### **2. Launch a paperless revolution.**

Now that the school year is over, it’s a great time to think about reducing some of the paperwork you’re currently storing. Create a filing system that takes advantage of paperless options. Most desktop printers now have built-in scanning options, and smartphone apps like CamScanner make it easier than ever to create pdf scans of receipts, invoices, bills, and more. Plus, the ArtKive app allows families to store children’s drawings as computer files and share them effortlessly with family members anywhere in the world.

If you’re like most families, you won’t be able to get rid of all your paperwork. Tax forms should be kept for at least seven years, and items like marriage certificates, college degrees, and professional licenses should be maintained in their paper forms when possible. Many other items, however, can be scanned into digital formats and stored on a backup hard drive or in the cloud, reducing the size of your filing cabinet and the amount of clutter in your house. Take advantage of a rainy summer day to go through your files, make scans, and send unnecessary paper items to the recycler.

### 3. Sort and organize before purchasing storage options.

Hanging racks, modular shelving, and similar options allow you to maximize the storage value of the vertical space in closets, pantries, and small rooms, while storage bins allow you to keep items organized, shelved, or out of sight beneath. But if you rush out and buy what you think you'll need before you begin, you may find that you've under- or over-estimated your needs – or that what you bought doesn't fit what you plan to keep. Instead, begin by using the storage options you currently have. Designate one end of your closet for the clothing, shoes, and accessories you plan to keep; then, hang up clothes and pull out everything else. Use storage tubs to keep toys, project items, tools, sports gear, and other "like" items together; if the items overflow the tub, stack them neatly on top or alongside it (or go through them again to see if you can further reduce the collection!).

Maintain a list: if you see your tools overflowing from the toolbox, remind yourself to purchase a new one or to install a hanging board in your workspace so that tools can be arranged neatly. If you have several sweaters but no drawer space, make a note to install shelves in your closet so your sweaters can lie flat. Then, treat yourself to a shopping expedition with the confidence that you'll be choosing exactly the storage options your home needs.