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COMPUTER

FILE ORGANIZATION

The three most common places where files build-up are Downloads, Desktop, and Documents.

Look at **Downloads** as the default temporary drop zone. After downloading a file, rename it based on your preferred organization system. Dedicate some time each week to sorting and moving the files that you want to keep and deleting the rest. Try to avoid "just in case" thinking. Start each week with an empty Downloads folder.

Have you ever closed a browser window only to find a desktop covered in file icons, all with unintelligible names? An empty **Desktop** encourages shutting off and unplugging once we close all of our windows at the end of the workday. Clear the Desktop by sorting all files into their appropriate folders and moving those folders into the Documents folder. Make sure that when you are downloading and saving files that they either go to the Downloads folder to be sorted later or directly into the appropriate folder, never on the Desktop.

If you choose to store your files on your computer, store them within the appropriate folders within your **Documents** folder. Think "folders within folders within folders". So, for example, if you want to save your tax information on your computer, you might have a big folder called "Finances" and then, within that folder, "Taxes" and then separate folders for each tax year.

A recommended file naming scheme is to start with the date (YYYY/MM/DD) so that files are in chronological order and then come up with a name that is short, yet descriptive so that it can easily be located via the search bar or just by looking within the appropriate folder. Example: 2020/04/18 Tax Return

A good alternative to storing files on your computer is to use a cloud storage system, such as Dropbox. That way you can access your files wherever you are and don't have to worry about taking up space on your hard drive. Back up files to an external hard drive and back up your most important documents in the Cloud.



COMPUTER

DESKTOP

The goal here is to make it so that you have as little distractions as possible when you open your computer in addition to ensuring that the apps that you need most frequently are still easily accessible. Take the time to clean up any files and folders that are currently on your desktop and sort them into your long-term storage location of choice.

Only keep app shortcuts on the Dock or taskbar that you use every day. Hide the dock on Mac by going to System Preferences > Dock > Automatically hide and show the Dock. On Windows, right-click an empty space on the taskbar > Taskbar settings > Automatically hide the taskbar in desktop mode.

Choose a calming desktop wallpaper.

APPLICATIONS

If you have the Spotify app on your Mac you can prevent it from automatically opening by going to Spotify > Preferences > Show Advanced Settings > Select "no" from the drop-down menu under Startup and Window Behavior - Open Spotify automatically after you log into the computer.

Sort through all of your notes. Again, think of "folders within folders" and store notes in their proper place if you're going to keep them and get rid of them if you're done with them. Give all those old shopping lists the boot!

Open up your applications and uninstall and delete those that you don't use.

Empty your trash folder. You should do this weekly.

INTERNET BROWSER

Close any tabs that you're not actively using. Consider adding just those tabs to your bookmarks bar.

Delete unnecessary bookmarks, shortcuts, and/or favorites. Clean up your bookmarks bar by only keeping your most-used websites on it and put the rest into folders so that they are hidden but still accessible. Use folders for social media and email to reduce temptations and distractions.

Clear out any unused browser extensions. Are you actually using deals with something like Shoptagr? If not, uninstall. Do install an ad blocker extension if you don't already have one.

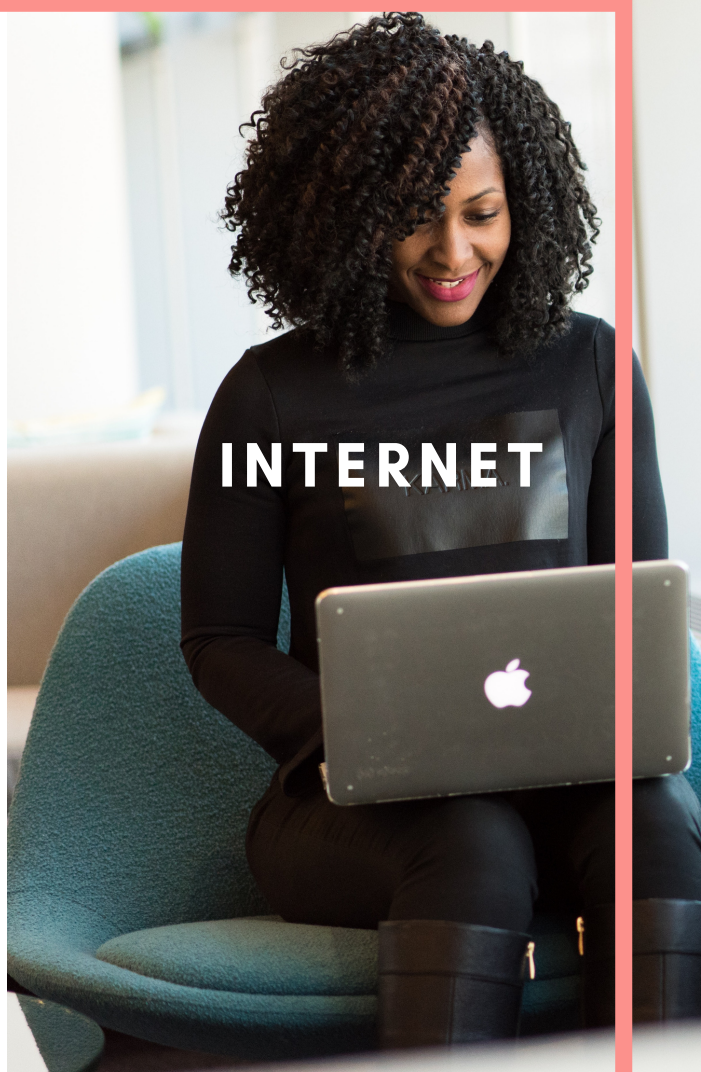
You may also want to consider a password manager, such as LastPass to store all of your passwords securely. The idea here is to make logging into your various accounts as secure and painless as possible.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Spend time unfollowing and unfriending accounts that don't have a positive impact on you. Anything that doesn't make you feel good about yourself and where you are right now in your life journey should be deleted.

If you find that you've been spending more time on social media than you'd like, consider a website blocking browser extension, such as Block Site. You can set hours when you don't want to be able to access certain sites, like social media.

Clear out your YouTube Watch Later playlist. If it's been sitting there for some time, either watch it or get rid of it. Same with your Netflix or any other streaming service list.





EMAIL

INBOX

Probably one of the more daunting tasks, but once done, you should feel really proud of yourself.

Start by deleting any unnecessary emails. Go through folders and labels such as your starred messages, forums, and promotions. If you can bulk delete, do so. For more important messages, such as those you have starred, manually sort and delete. It's important to not use your email inbox as a to-do list because things can easily become lost as new messages come in.

Sort any messages that you decide to keep into folders and subfolders. Create a folder for newsletters and make a filter so that any that you are subscribed to go there automatically. You can find out how to create filters in Gmail [here](#).

To avoid constant distractions from your inbox set aside a few times a day to check your email. Address those messages that need attention right away. Sort messages into folders and then close your email until it's time to check it again.



SUBSCRIPTIONS

Unsubscribe to promotional emails that you don't use and newsletters that you don't read. Unroll.me is a good resource for finding these emails and bulk unsubscribing but if you prefer, you can do it manually by unsubscribing as the messages come in or not touching any of them during the week and then, at the end of the week, go through and unsubscribe to all of them at the same time.



PHONE

PHOTOS

Go through your camera roll and delete old photos and videos. Focus on duplicates and screenshots that you no longer need. Create albums for the pictures that you would like to keep, organize by date or event. Sync your phone and computer photos and back up the most important ones to an external hard drive or cloud storage.

CONTACTS

Delete old contacts. Block the ones that you have labeled "Do not answer" (the one that you probably don't even remember whose number that belongs to) and delete the contact. Sync your contacts with your computer, email, or cloud storage.

APPS

Start by closing any open apps. Usually, you can do this by double-clicking the home button or swiping on the screen. Now, go through all of your apps and uninstall those that you don't use. A good rule is that if it hasn't been opened in the last 30 days, let it go.

Next, check which apps use your battery the most. On iPhone: Settings > Battery > Last 10 days. On Android: Settings > Device > Battery or Settings > Power > Battery Use. Delete any apps that you rarely use and for those that you decide to keep, set it so that they don't run in the background.

Create folders for your apps and add them to a second page. Only keep the apps that you use the most on your homepage.

Consider disabling push notifications.

DIGITAL DECLUTTER CHECKLIST

COMPUTER

- Rename and organize files into folders and subfolders
- Back up files onto external hard drives and/or a cloud storage system
- Empty the Downloads folder
- Empty the Desktop
- Remove shortcuts for apps that aren't used regularly
- Uninstall unused apps
- Sort and delete notes and old documents
- Empty trash bin
- Only keep most used apps on the Dock/task bar
- Hide Dock/task bar

EMAIL

- Delete old messages
- Organize remaining emails into folders and subfolders
- Unsubscribe from newsletters and promotion lists
- Clean out inbox (don't use it as a to do list)

INTERNET

- Close tabs
- Delete unused bookmarks
- Sort bookmarks into folders
- Delete unused browser extensions

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Unfriend or unfollow accounts that don't have a positive impact
- Clean out Watch Later playlist on Youtube
- Clean out lists on any streaming services
- Cancel unused memberships and accounts

PHONE

- Clean out and sync camera roll
- Delete old contacts
- Delete unused apps
- Organize apps into folders
- Disable push notifications

DIGITAL DECLUTTER SCHEDULE

DAILY

- Close browser tabs
- Clean out email inbox
- Rename files and organize into folders
- Delete old files
- Back up files

WEEKLY

- Clean out camera roll and sync phone photos with computer
- Sort and empty Downloads
- Sort and empty Desktop
- Check for any updates to install
- Empty trash bin

MONTHLY

- Unfollow and unfriend accounts on social media
- Clear caches and history
- Unsubscribe from any new but unread newsletters
- Review and delete apps on computer and phone
- Organize bookmarks
- Delete old contacts
- Organize email folders
- Organize photos and videos

ANNUALLY

- Get computer professionally cleaned