



Organizing Plain & Simple: A Ready Reference Guide with Hundreds of Solutions to Your Everyday Clutter Challenges

Donna Smallin Kuper

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Desk drowning in papers? No room for the car in the garage? Santa still sitting on the roof in May? The home office swallows up whole rooms, as does the family computer station. Then there are the cell phone chargers, the remotes, and the play areas, not to mention our collections -- books, DVDs, toys, magazines. Time management experts agree that when the minor things that take up space in the mind are eliminated, there is room to think about the big things. The same goes for the home. The clarity that comes from de-cluttering rooms, finances, and time promotes mental clarity, peacefulness, and contemplation. When everything is organized, it is easier to enjoy the meaningful things in life. *Organizing Plain & Simple* is like a course from an expert teacher, grounded in the fundamentals and enriched with philosophy, tips, anecdotes, illustrations - everything necessary to make home and life run more smoothly. Donna Smallin takes a personalized, nonjudgemental approach to explaining how to assess each individual's situation and suggesting where to start organizing - room by room - and then covers how to stay organized. Then she offers advice on organizing time and finances, as well as organizing for the seasons and for special events - the birth of a baby, combining households, a move, kids going off to college, successful downsizing. Smallin presents a broad range of innovative solutions in the running feature "One Challenge, Three Solutions" that includes tips for solving classic organizational issues from a wide range of professional organizers.

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From Reader Review Organizing Plain & Simple: A Ready Reference Guide with Hundreds of Solutions to Your Everyday Clutter Challenges for online ebook

Julie Bestry says

A good sign of the value of a reference book is how often you actually reference it. I have owned many, many books about organizing over the years, but there are few I keep, and even fewer I've kept close at hand. My copy of *Organizing Plain & Simple* is not only well-thumbed, with lots of little creases in the spine, but it has fringed "bangs" of tape flags popping up from the top and sides.

As a professional organizer, it's my vocation, as well as my avocation, to keep up with the essentials of organizing for all of my client types, but there are situations with which I find myself dealing less often. Because of this, the last major section of the book is where I head the most often -- it has everything to do with transitions. When the issue of estate organizing pops up, I don't just pull out the book, but often bring it with me to clients to show them the lists and help prompt our planning for wills, legal documents, last wishes and more. The chapter on preparing for new beginnings (adopting a pet, bringing home a baby, going off to college, etc.) is eminently quotable, and the section on moving should be everybody's first stop to get a handle on relocating without overwhelm.

Donna Smallin mixes her own insightful guidance with a variety of expert advice from others, so for household organizing (room by room) to financial organizing to personal and family time management, it's a compendium of "Got this issue? Do this, or this, or this!" without either overwhelming the reader or forcing any square pegs into round holes.

It's hard to make a general resource book on any topic, let alone organizing, be applicable for all readers, but *Organizing Plain & Simple* is timeless, and both broad and deep enough to belong on every bookshelf. If you've known The Joy of Cooking, you can think of Smallin as sharing the joy (or at least *ease* of organizing.

Camisha Maze says

I love anything that has to do with organization

Rose says

Donna Smallin's "Organizing Plain and Simple" was a very helpful, all-in-one reference guide to organizing different rooms and tasks around the home, whether it was sorting bills, sorting clothes in the closet, organizing and coordinating tasks among the family, and other measures. I liked it, though I'll admit I didn't really learn all that much from it than I already knew or could draw conclusions by with common sense. I think if you're looking for a book that supplements other organizational guides or something that compiles this information in one place, this would be a good one to pick up, but it may be helpful only to a point if you've read many other guides of its nature.

Overall score: 3/5 stars.

Laura says

There's an overwhelming amount of information in this book, which makes it a long read. Although there are no pictures, she recommends some unsightly solutions such as organizing your jewelry in egg cartons and hanging milk cartons from the ceiling in the bathroom to organize your things. I guess I'm more into aesthetics than the author--usually that's why I want to be more organized... But, if I ever wanted to organize a garage/yard sale, this is the first book I would turn to for advice.

Sandy says

My particular interest is in organizing and controlling the physical stuff in my house. This book covered that, but also organizing your finances, your time, your family, etc. Because of that, much of the book will only pertain to people in specific circumstances - my children are all grown now, for instance, so all the advice about organizing info about the family activities was no longer relevant. And, if you already have your finances under basic control, there's nothing new or exciting here.

Overall, though, all the advice seems reasonably sound and sensible. Definitely a book to get from the library and check out the sections that pertain and gather useful tips. It's not a book that I would buy to keep around as a reference work, though.

Amanda Hall says

This book probably saved my life, my marriage and my sanity. I borrowed it from the library and renewed it one time and plan to buy my own copy in the future. She has a way of putting things that you already know or should have thought of in a way that makes them sink in. I liked it so much I immediately requested Cleaning Plain and Simple by this author.

Tanya says

I found this book at the thrift shop and it seemed like it would help me to get organized. A lot of the tips were things that I'm already doing, but I did get some useful ideas from it.

The author covers the entire house on room at a time and includes sections for insurance. She gives helpful guidance on what to keep or toss, how to organize things and a list of what you should really need for each area. I don't have kids, a garage or cellar, so those areas didn't help me much, but it was still a nice read. Smallin's tone is light and fun. She really knows what she's talking about and conveys it in a nice way.

I learned more about my refrigerator (I've never really thought about how to use my crisper drawers.) and which fruits and vegetables I should and shouldn't put in there. I also learned that I can store Christmas lights by wrapping them around an empty wrapping paper tube. I never would've thought of that. No more fighting

with tangled strands of lights for me! There's a list of helpful websites and I'll be checking out a few of them.

I would recommend this to anyone who is trying to get organized and declutter their home.

Melissa says

I pick up this book every couple of months or so. I use it specifically in different parts of my house. I remember using it in my daughter's room to help her down-size her "stuff". She didn't have enough room to even play with a friend in there. Granted it was a tiny room, only 8x9 ft, but by identifying what she actually had out-grown, we were able to clear an area to set up her handmade, wooden dollhouse. She & her friends enjoyed many hrs of pretending.

I also used it in my kitchen. Here is where the paper stacks, mail & clutter always seem to accumulate. I am able to just accept that as a part of my life right now, esp. because we had 4 teenagers in the house. I see this area as a challenge now- how well I can keep up with the paper. I esp. enjoyed the lists given for an "essential kitchen". These are the basics you need to actually cook. I realized I was hanging on to plates, baking dishes and gadgets that I was simply never going to use. I was able to let them go. I didn't even sell them. I was able to give them to friends & neighbors because I was totally free from them. I used that spirit all over the house, when it came time for us to move. After 6 yrs of accumulation, I pared down to more than half a 2000 sq.ft. home. When it was packed in the semi, it took less than 1/3 of it.

I used it to organize little spaces too. When I felt like it was time to clean out my jewelry, a closet or the entry-way. I would go to those sections, get inspiration & tips; make some notes and then tackle. That is what I find most valuable about this book. The subject matter is covered in way more detail in many other organizing books, this one gives it to you in little bits. I feel like I use it like a how-to reference. Quick turn to the section, read a few blocks, make a sketch, make a list and I'm ready to go-to-it.

N.L. Riviezzo says

A straight forward book. Useful for the right people. Most of the information is found in every other 'organization' book out there. The writing style is a little odd and can be odd to read in one sitting. This book is more for viewing a section at a time. The content is divided up into 'rooms' - office, kitchen, living room, etc. - with organizational tidbits and suggestions for each room. I found some of the suggestions to be very strange but that's probably because they were the right suggestions for me. Everyone has their own organizational style - and this book does state that - and alas mine did not mesh well with some of the ideas.

Allie says

Not recommended. I was looking for some interesting tips on streamlining my life/process, but everything in this book was pretty run of the mill stuff. There were a couple of good ideas, but nothing really clever, innovative, or applicable.

Lisa says

This would be a great book for the totally unorganized. I, myself, am fairly organized and was hoping to glean some new insight - but I didn't. It is VERY detailed though and even includes financial planning, organizing estates and so much more - even pet organizing. It doesn't have as many lists as I would like to see though. All in all it is a good book to help you get organized but nothing super "aha" in there...

Annburnett says

This is a good reference book for decluttering. It also helps to motivate if you're trying to get into the decluttering mood.

Jennifer says

Oh my goodness. This book was a lifesaver. I was (am?) one of those "perfectionists" that couldn't get organized because I was waiting for the "perfect system" to find me. The book gently set me on the right path! I wish I had found this book when I was in school - but I probably wouldn't have had the time to read it!

There are some bizarre recommendations in here to re-use old things as organization tools, but the point is to get to thinking about how you can use different things to organize that you may not have thought of using before. One of the greatest tips in this book that now seems sooo obvious, is to put things where they will be used. Like duh - why did I not think of that before? Also, it gives guidelines for how long to hold onto old bills. You mean I don't have to keep those power bills from 1998 anymore? Really? Anyway, if you are looking for a book to help you organize your home - this is a great one.

Jenn says

This is a wonderful book to peruse for organizing tidbits but overall it's fairly common sense. I only started housekeeping 4 years ago and knew most of the advice suggested in this book. However, there were some expert tips which I was unfamiliar with and am excited to incorporate them into my housekeeping / decluttering routine. One such suggestion was called 'The Hanger Trick'. When you switch the clothes in your closet from season to season, hang everything initially with the hanger facing you rather than the wall. As you wear each item, replace it with the hanger facing the wall. Then at the end of the season, you'll know which clothes to donate / sell. Genius! (especially since I have a knack for hanging onto clothes). Overall, I felt that this was one of the better organizing books on the market and well worth a look even if you only pick up a few bits of advice.

Kristine says

This is the most comprehensive life organization book I have come across. I took a lot of notes. Some of the information is a little out-of-date since it was written in 2002, but the main principles are still valid.

