



Mess Stress? 7 Steps to Organizing a Home Workspace by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

Everybody needs an office. Everyone. It makes perfect sense.

Kids, adults, retired folks and at-home parents all need a workspace to which they can retreat, think, create, and get the job done, whether that's bill payment, homework, medical claims, holiday cards, or catalog orders. For organizational supplies for a workspace, I'm a huge fan of The Container Store and Target, but go anywhere that's affordable, convenient and well-stocked.

1. The Place:

Sure, a room with a view is nice, but not everyone has that. If not, claim a corner of a communal room to use when no one's around. No corners to be found? Create a portable Office-in-a-Box, or perhaps a folding screen could partition a section of a room.

2. The Essential Stuff:

Comfortable chair, phone, computer if possible, multi-tiered in-box, drawer or box of office supplies. (*e.g. stationary, stamps, stapler, tape, post-its, pens, clips, calculator, highlighter, permanent marker.*)

3. The System:

A file cabinet or even a milk crate box with color-coded folders works well. Create your own categories, for example Red = Paid Bills. Use manila sub-folders within that one for cable, electric, credit cards bills, etc. *Important!* Create a "Pending" file where you keep clear documentation of all matters that are in-the-works and not yet completed. Check it weekly, and as an item comes to completion, file appropriately.

4. File Drawer #1:

Ongoing files that do not change each year, such as copies of your Living Will, Power of Attorney, user manuals for appliances, emergency contacts, etc.

5. File Drawer #2:

Annual tax-related files, such as current bills, bank and brokerage statements, insurance claims, papers you will box at year-end for taxes.

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