

# ORGANIZING

## Everything needs a home

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** This article is the second in a series called *Shipshape Basic Training*. In this series, I'll describe basic organizing principles and how you can utilize them to organize your home, your office, and your life.

Out of all the principles used in organizing, this one is the most important by far! Not only is it essential to the process of organization, it is also extremely versatile. It can be used to order anything from dishes to shoes to time to ideas.

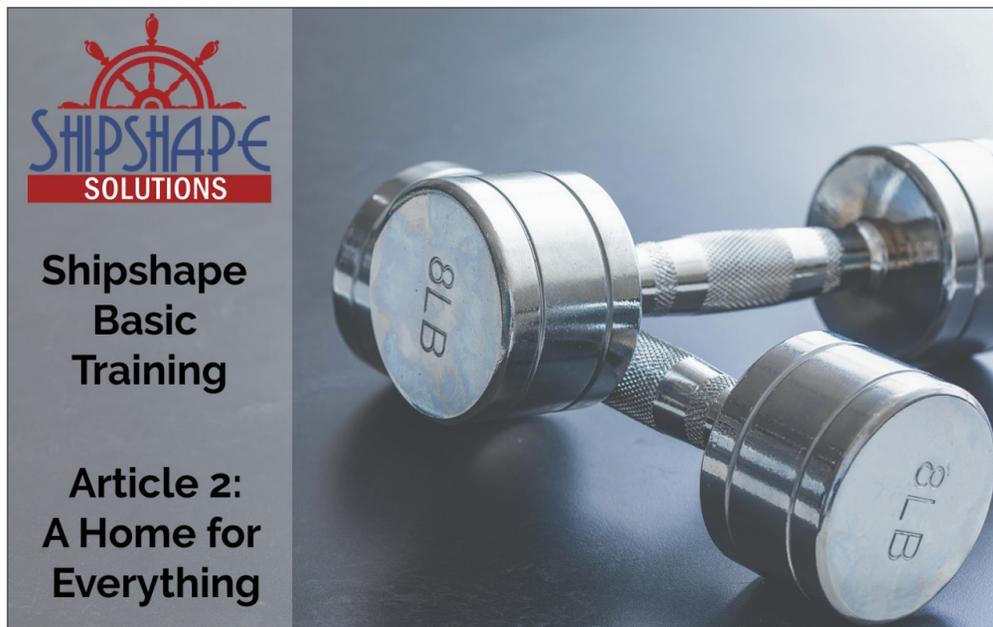


Angie Hyche

I dare say that without employing this fundamental rule, any attempt to establish or maintain order will fail. What is this vital practice, and how can you use it to organize your home?

Simply put, everything needs a home. Every physical item needs to have a home, a location where it lives when it's not in use. This is the key foundational principle in organizing. After an item has been removed from its home and has been used, it should be replaced into its home as quickly as possible. If an item is used by multiple people, ideally each person should weigh in on the decision of where to store it. At the very least, every person who uses the item should know where it's located. Every category of items should ideally have just one home, not multiple locations.

Why is establishing a home for items so important? Without homes, items tend to live on surfaces, like counters, on top of pieces of furniture, or the floor. Too many items on surfaces contributes to clutter. Establishing homes for items saves time and money. Without homes, it's difficult to find items, so we end up wasting a lot of time looking. If we can't find them, we frequently buy another, thus spending money unnecessarily. Without



homes, keeping an area tidy is very difficult because we don't know what to do with the homeless items we find.

To visualize how efficient having homes for items is, think about the simple task of emptying the dishwasher. It's a task we do almost every day. We may dread it, but once we get started, it doesn't usually take very long. Why? Because most of us have a place for everything we unload from the dishwasher. We know where to put the cups, the plates, the bowls, and the silverware. We can do it almost mindlessly, and it usually takes less than five minutes.

How do you decide on the best home for an item(s)? These principles will help you:

— **Location of use.** If possible, an item should be stored close to where it is used. It makes sense that if you primarily use an item near the stove (like oven mitts or some utensils), you should store it near the stove. Nail polish supplies are usually stored in the bathroom. However, if you tend

to paint your nails in another room, you might want to store them there.

— **Frequency of use.** Putting the most used items in areas that are easy to access will increase the efficiency of a space. For example, in the bathroom, toiletries that you use every day should be placed in a drawer or cabinet that is easy to reach. It may make sense for an item that is only occasionally used to be stored in a more remote area. A turkey roasting pan takes up a lot of space. If you only use it at Thanksgiving and your kitchen storage is limited, you may want to store it in a more remote place like a basement, garage or attic.

— **Like with like.** Items in the same category are best kept together. There are examples aplenty: baking dishes, cleaning supplies, pots and pans, sewing supplies, household tools, undergarments, etc. When a category of items is in one location, it's easier to find and replace them. It just makes logical sense.

— **Items used together.** Likewise,

items that you use at the same time should be kept close to each other. This prevents unnecessary movement. Shoes and socks are an easy example. Since I started storing my jewelry in my closet, it's been much easier and more efficient to match my jewelry choice with my clothes.

— **Safety.** Make sure any dangerous items are not accessible to children or anyone who can't safely use them. Knives, medications, weapons, toxic cleaners and other hazardous items should be stored in a place that is either out of reach and/or locked. Don't store anything in a way that blocks access to an area. I sometimes see piles of clutter on the floor of a hallway or a garage that block a frequently used path. Don't store heavy items in a high location. All of these situations are accidents waiting to happen.

— **Physical limitations.** Consider any physical limitations of users. A person who is 5 feet 2 won't appreciate you placing their favorite coffee mug on the

highest shelf. Similarly, someone who has difficulty bending doesn't need their favorite snacks to be stored on the bottom shelf of the pantry.

— **Where would you look for it?**

This question has proved to be so useful for myself and for clients! For an item that doesn't have a home or for a new item, ask yourself where you would look for it. This will tell you how you tend to think about it and categorize it. Ask others in the house who will be using it as well.

What if your whole house was just like the items in your dishwasher? What if there was one place for everything in your home? Wouldn't keeping things picked up be so easy? Wouldn't it be wonderful to look around and know that even if things got a little messy (an inevitable reality in our lives), picking up would seem almost painless because we would simply have to put everything back in its proper place?

Does the idea of having a home for everything seem too good to be true? It is entirely possible to reach this state of organization. It will take some time, no doubt. You may think you don't have that time. But did you know that for every minute spent organizing, an hour is earned? You don't have to do it all at once. There are many excellent plans for getting your whole house in order that require just a few minutes per day.

Are you too overwhelmed to even begin? I can help! I offer an inexpensive one-hour "Do It Yourself" consult. I come to your home, spend some time talking about your needs, and give you a custom step-by-step plan. Or I can accomplish the same thing virtually. Contact me today, and let's get started!

*Angie Hyche is a professional organizer and owner of Shipshape Solutions and the author of "Unholy Mess: What the Bible Says about Clutter" (coming soon!). Email her at [angie@shipshape.solutions](mailto:angie@shipshape.solutions).*