

Organizing Café:

Now scheduling classes for Get Organized Month in January 2009 and beyond. Contact us to schedule for your group.

Lions and Tigers and Bears, Oh My!

Does fear come to mind when you think about the receipts you've squirreled away in your purse, drawers, cars and shoe boxes? This time of year many households start mounding up receipts... purchases for school...holiday presents...end of year business purchases. Without a doubt, one of the most often asked questions I get is what do I do with receipts? When I do run in to clients with neatly stapled and stored receipts dating back to the 70's, I always ask, "Is there a bona fide reason for keeping them?" Here are several strategies to lose the tricks and keep the treats.

Consider This

There's been a lot of chatter on the professional organizer boards about electronically scanned images versus original receipts. Bottom line, tools like Neat Receipts can be used as legal documents, but I still recommend retaining hard copies when practical, especially for businesses. However, if your data is organized electronically, there is no need to spend time rearranging & organizing paper records. Go do something fun instead, like trick or treating with your kids!

Receipt Management Made Less Scary

1. Be Ruthless. Keep only what you need. Fast food, gas and incidental purchases usually aren't receipts to keep.
2. Consult the Wizard. If you run a business, have a chronic health condition, or have other tax-affecting situations, ask your tax advisor what records and receipts you need to store.
3. Think Big. For significant household purchases, reduce your stress by half. Staple the receipt to the manual/warranty paperwork and file in a *Warranties & Manuals* folder. When you need service or reference, it will all be one place, not two.
4. Like it or not. Group receipts for similar items together. Use a lowly envelope labeled appropriately to catch a category. Christmas gift receipts in one. School purchases in another. When the time is right for you (weeks or months later) you can throw them away without needing to review or re-sort.
5. Cheater's strategy. Grab two shoe boxes. Designate one for "Even Year" and one for "Odd Year". At the end of 2008 all of this year's receipts should be in the Even Year box. Close it, put it aside, and start putting 2009 receipts in the Odd Year box. In 2010, open & shred all of the 2008 receipts in about 30 seconds, and re-use the Even Year box. Too simple!

Simple Tip: Only keep receipts if you reconcile your statements; if not, dump both clutter and guilt!

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