

## Quick Guide: How To Rid Yourself of Files and Piles

Do you often spend more than half an hour looking for things? Do you often say, 'I know exactly which pile this document is in?' Yes to both questions? Here are the **top ten tips** to organise your work area, your desk and your filing:

- 1. Organise cupboards, drawers and bookcases.** These are all handy hiding places for dumping things. By ruthlessly clearing cupboards and drawers first, you will free up space so that you can then clear clutter from your desk.
- 2. Get rid of your piles!** Only have on your desk what you are currently working on. It makes you more organised, keeps you in control and helps you to concentrate.
- 3. Only have in your in-tray what you are planning to do that day.** Everything else should be in your 'bring forward' system or filed. You could have a pending tray for items awaiting further information or action later that day but time management purists would say extra information should be filed.
- 4. Create a 'reading file'** for items that are for information and **allocate time in your diary** to do this. Don't keep the whole magazine or document – just the pages you are going to read. Date them and if you haven't read them within a month ditch them!
- 5. Make a note on finished documents or paper of where you intend to file them.** This prevents you having to reread and decide on destination when you actually come to file the document.
- 6. Don't file hard copy information already stored on computer.** Ensure a sensible directory structure for your computer files with reliable back-up. It is quicker to do, easier to find and amend, and takes up less room.
- 7. Don't file material which is readily available from other sources** such as the originator of the document, central archives, internet reference sources.
- 8. If you are tempted to file an item you haven't been bothered to read, ask yourself a very serious 'why?'**
- 9. If missing files are a problem in your office,** a simple tracking system can be introduced. Keep some A4 cards by the filing cabinets, each divided into three columns: Name, Location, Date. Anybody borrowing a file enters their details on the card and places it in the appropriate empty file pocket.
- 10. Build up good filing habits.** Spending a little time regularly is much less of a chore than trying to wade through a large pile of documents for filing. **Try to file daily if possible.**

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