

# Productivity & Organization for Women

## *Lesson Sixteen*

This is our final week of instruction and we are going to work on the home office, paperwork, and computer clutter. Although this is an area of our homes that few outsiders see, it is one which requires frequent tending in order to be productive and organized.

Today we will focus on daily paperwork, including:

1. **Mail** – Open mail immediately. Recycle the envelopes and junk mail.
2. **Periodicals**– Place magazines and newspapers into a “to read” basket. This can be kept in any room where you commonly read. Keep these items in one location and recycle or donate them as soon as they are read.
3. **Bills** – Pay paper bills when they come into the house. No more lost or late bills if you address them immediately!
4. All other **paperwork** – Put everything else into your in-box. This should be an obvious box, basket, or file that anyone in the family can access. Whenever anyone has non-urgent paperwork for you, they need to put it into your in-box. At least once a week you will sort through this box.

Sample periodical baskets (Amazon affiliate links):

- [Leather magazine basket](#)
- [Banana leaf basket](#)

Sample in-boxes:

- [Wire tray organizer](#)
- [Wire wall file](#)

Your assignment today is:

1. Set up a recycling bin near your mail collection area.
2. Set up a “to read” basket for periodicals.
3. Keep envelopes and stamps easily accessible so you can immediately pay paper bills. Or, switch all of your bills to online payment.
4. Create an in-box for all other paperwork.
5. Educate your family members as to how to use your in-box.

Additional Resources:

[21 Ways to Organize Your Office](#) (blog post)

[Paper Chase: The ABCs of Household Paper Management](#) (blog post)

[8 Tips for Organizing Your Paperwork](#) (blog post)

[Organizing Family Paperwork](#) (blog post)

# Productivity & Organization for Women

## *Lesson Seventeen*

Now you are going to look at your desk area. Please note that your “desk” should not be your kitchen table. You need a designated area where you can keep a filing system and easy to access items such as pens, post-its, envelopes and stamps.

It is important to have a clear, clean and organized desk area for all of the paperwork that passes through your home. Without that sense of organization, bills are late, appointments are missed, correspondence is ignored, and there is chaos in general. Do not neglect this part of your home and life!

To declutter your desk area, you may need to work on sections, but like last week, you are still going to create temporary piles. These piles will be going away tomorrow, so don't worry! You will be sorting through the following areas:

**Desk:** clear off the desk, then put only the essentials back

**Drawer:** toss most of the stuff, then put things back in an organized way

**Files:** sort through the files or create new ones

Your assignment today may take several days. Do these things in 5 minute bursts when you have time:

1. Clear off your desk and create a giant pile in a central area (floor, bed, etc.).
2. Sort everything into the following piles: recycle, shred, trash, to-do, file, move to somewhere else.
3. Put the to-do and file items in your in-box. Immediately recycle, shred, and trash your other items. Place the items in your “move” pile off to the side and take care of them at the end of this decluttering process.
4. Repeat the process with your drawers.
5. Pull out files and archived items. Put them in a box. We will work on these files tomorrow.

Additional Resources:

[How to Declutter Your Desk and Get Organized](#) (one minute movie)

[The Simple Guide to a Clutter Free Desk](#) (blog post)

[Top 10 Office Decluttering Tricks](#) (blog post)

# Productivity & Organization for Women

## *Lesson Eighteen*

Going through your files may take multiple days, depending on how much paperwork you have built up over the years. It is important to keep the essential paperwork, but also to rid yourself of the non-essential and outdated materials.

My favorite way to create a fabulous filing system is to use (Amazon affiliate links) [a file cabinet](#), and fill it with [colored hanging files](#) (I have close to 100). My hanging files are categorized by color (for example green = monthly statements, receipts, or paperwork). My hanging files are also labeled using the [FreedomFiler](#). When I first saw the [FreedomFiler](#) stickers, I was confident that I could re-create these for myself and save a lot of money. However, because of the color system and use of use, this is a purchase I do not regret.

To organize your files, you will need to look at everything. Shred or recycle anything that you no longer need (see additional resources). Then put everything that you need in folders that match the category. If you choose to purchase the [FreedomFiler](#) system and hanging folders, you may need to wait until these arrive.

Files that you **must** have include:

- Medical records
- ID documents (also keep a copy of these in a safe deposit box)
- Home property paperwork (including mortgage and title)
- Car paperwork for each car
- Insurance paperwork
- Memories (one for each family member)

In addition, I have files for: receipts, benefits, continuing education credits, warranties, manuals, current projects, coupons, etc.

Your assignment today may take several days. Do these things in 5 minute bursts when you have time:

1. Go through your files and recycle/shred unneeded paperwork.
2. On the following page, list the files that you will need.
3. Re-create your filing system to best meet your families needs. Consider using [colored hanging files](#) and [FreedomFiler](#).
4. Take a photo of your filing system and email the photo to me!

Additional Resources:

[Financial Clutter, What to Keep and What to Get Rid Of](#) (blog post)

[What Documents Should I Shred and What Should I Keep?](#) (blog post)

[Organizing Family Paperwork](#) (blog post)



# Productivity & Organization for Women

## *Lesson Nineteen*

Today we will work on an area that is noticed by no one but yourself. However, this area, like your paperwork, can cause ever ending stress and the feeling of always being behind. It is your email inbox. Although I use Gmail for all of my email needs, most other email systems have similar functions and features. You can also try out "[Inbox by Gmail](#)", which is my new favorite way to do email.

To conquer your email, you need to set aside some time to purge your inbox. If the email is over a month old, it would be pretty safe to assume that you no longer need that email. Archive it so that you have access later if needed, but it is out of your sight. Gmail allows for mass archiving that is extremely helpful.

Quickly archive as many emails from the last month as possible. Make sure to trash all junk email. You can set up a filter system to trash all junk mail from the the same annoying senders or use [unroll me](#) (more about this in a bonus lesson).

Your remaining emails should all be items that are active. These are the emails you must sort. I highly recommend creating the following folders:

- @waiting: emails that you are waiting for a reply or action
- @soon: emails or reminders that are happening soon or you will need soon
- @someday/maybe: emails that you may or may not act on

Now we are going to act on the remaining emails in your inbox. If there are any dates to remember, immediately put those into your calendar along with the reference information. If you are using "Inbox", you can set that email to snooze until the day that it is needed. Action items that will take less than 2 minutes should be dealt with immediately. Things that will take more than 2 minutes can either remain as an email visualreminder or written on your to-do list. Check out the "bonus" video on other tools you can use to clean up your email.

Your assignment today may take several days. Do these things in 5 minute bursts when you have time:

1. Purge your email box. Put all unnecessary emails into archive or the trash.
2. Sort your remaining emails into: @waiting, @soon, @someday/maybe.
3. Act on the remaining emails: put them in your calendar, do them, write them on your to-do list.

Additional Resources:

[How I Cleaned 1328 Email Out of my Inbox in an Hour](#) (blog post)

[Get Organized: How to Clean Up Your Inbox](#) (blog post and video)

[How to Use Inbox Like a Pro](#) (video)

# Productivity & Organization for Women

## *Lesson Twenty*

You now have a lot of new paperwork and email habits to make a regular part of you life! How can you best turn these into routines?

After you have set up the systems outlined this week, you need to add these new habits onto your calendar!

Block out times to do the following:

Daily:

1. Sort mail. Recycle junk mail.
2. Put away periodicals. Recycle these as soon as they are read.
3. Pay bills immediately or put them in your in-box.
4. Put all other paperwork lying around into your in-box.
5. Go through your emails and archive, trash, sort, and act on all emails from the day.

Weekly:

1. Act on everything in your to-do box by either doing it, filing it, responding to it, or paying it.
2. Look through all of your @ files in your email in-box.
3. Make sure your desk area is completely pile-free.

Your assignment today:

1. Schedule time blocks for your daily and weekly paperwork as well as email decluttering. Add them into your weekly schedule and/or calendar.
2. Finish your jobs from the week and get working on making these new paperwork and email habits into routines!

Additional Resources:

[Creating a Daily Routine for Organizing Paperwork](#) (blog post)

[Organizing Paper with a Weekly Paperwork Session](#) (blog post)