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# FAMILYSTYLE

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# DECLUTTER THE GREEN WAY

Can getting organized and going green be synonymous concepts? Yes, says Helen Coronato, author of *Eco-Friendly Families* (Alpha Books, 2008). "When we're organized, we know what we have and we need to buy less stuff," Coronato says. "The less we bring into our homes, the fewer resources we're using—and the less clutter we end up living with."

Ready to give your home a green organizational makeover? Here's how.

## CUT HOUSEHOLD WASTE

Paper is a huge source of clutter in most homes. Get it under control by being selective, says Los Angeles-based organizational expert Jill Pollack. If you aren't interested in a new credit card, opt out by calling 1-888-567-8688. View bank statements and pay bills online too.

Plug a jumble of cords into a single power strip. You'll eliminate an eyesore and conserve energy. "Research shows that 5 to 13 percent of a home's energy usage goes to 'vampire' appliances—things like computers, TVs and air conditioners—which use electricity when they're plugged in but turned off," says Ann Bingley Gallops, owner of Open Spaces Feng Shui in New York City. "You

can effectively 'unplug' gadgets when they're not in use by switching off the power strip."

Designate a single reusable water bottle for each family member. You'll reduce the pile of discarded plastic in landfills—as well as the number of half-empty bottles cluttering your home or car.

Switch to multiuse green cleaners instead of single-job products. You'll lessen your family's exposure to chemicals and save space by not having a plethora of products under your kitchen sink.

Finally, find new homes for usable items you no longer want. Then enjoy your newly decluttered space—a boon for your peace of mind and the environment.

## TAKE STOCK IN THE KITCHEN

Arrange your kitchen pantry like a grocery store so you don't waste or duplicate what you have, says professional organizer Melinda Anderson, president and founder of Southern Home Organizers in the Atlanta area. "Keep your canned veggies in one area, pasta grouped together and so on."

It's a great job for the kids to tackle with you. As a bonus it can build spatial reasoning skills—the ability to visualize patterns and mentally manipulate them. It's a skill they'll use to conceptualize solutions to multistep problems in areas such as science and math.

## KEEP CLOTHES IN ORDER

Know what's in your closets so you don't purchase your child yet another pair of jeans. If you find a clothing item that needs repair, fix it so it can return to your wardrobe. Donate items you no longer wear and recycle stained T-shirts and other unwearables as cleaning rags.

Mount hooks near each person's closet for clothing items they wear regularly. Clothes that air out are often good for another wearing or two before hitting the laundry. "You'll prolong the life of your garments and you'll also save resources by not washing things that aren't really dirty," says Pollack.

## 5 everyday ways to maintain order

- 1 Keep a shopping bag in the closet for items you want to donate. "If you realize you won't wear something anymore, immediately put it in the bag," says Anderson.
- 2 Cut down on paper clutter by printing documents only when necessary. Instead of storing paper files, keep digital versions on your computer.
- 3 Open mail and deal with it daily and you'll never be faced with a towering stack of bills, invitations and catalogs.
- 4 Unpack everything and put it where it belongs each time you bring a shopping bag into the house. Choosing a reusable bag helps: You'll be forced to empty it each time you want to use it again.
- 5 Don't let your shower become a shampoo graveyard, says Pollack. Open a new bottle only after you've emptied another.