

CONQUERING PAPER MOUNTAIN

Six Steps To Freedom from Paper Clutter

Information is power. But unless you can find the information you need, at the moment you need it, you're powerless. Consider all the books, magazines and articles you save. You may be saving them "to get around to reading", or if you've read them, you are afraid to throw them away "just in case" you'll need to access the information again. They pile up higher and higher. And what of the stacks of paper that cover your desk? The following six questions will give you some perspective and will help you organize it.

1. What good is information if it is lost in piles? If you can't find it, it's worthless.
2. Could you find the same information at the library or on the internet?
3. Will the information quickly become outdated? If so, you're wasting valuable space by saving old publications or articles, when the most current information is on the internet.
4. Will you ever *really* get around to all the things you save to read later? Magazines and newspapers keep showing up every month, so don't pretend that you'll "get around to reading it" later. If you don't read it, ditch it because another one with similar content will be in your mailbox shortly.
5. Do you need to take action on this paper, such as file it, act on it, or hand it off to someone else? Do so as quickly as possible so it doesn't become a pile.
6. Does this paper require a future action? If so, put it into a "holding" file until the designated date arrives and add a tickler to your calendar so you remember where you put the paper.

Ask yourself these six questions the next time you catch yourself stacking papers on a pile. If you teach yourself that you don't need to be the keeper of all information, or know everything right this minute, you can break your habit of keeping information "just in case".

By utilizing action files, a pending file and by making fast decisions about whether to keep or toss, you will be taking steps to conquer the mountain of paper in your life. When you develop an easy system for keeping the flow of paper moving, you'll never have to deal with the big paper pile-up again.

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