

How to Organize Your Folders and Files

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We all hate housekeeping--It's not much fun. This goes for our computers too. I hate to break it to you, but regular housekeeping is as necessary in our digital life as in the life outside of computers!

Symptoms

1. Your computer feels sluggish. Sometimes it's slow to start and applications take forever to load. You try to save files and your computer balks and gives you the spinning beach ball (the computer's version of the finger).
2. You need to find an important file and don't have a clue where to look. You aren't even sure of the document's title but you rummage about anyway hoping to get lucky. You finally remember the tech tip about using the Finder's smart search capability, but you can't even find a copy of the tip! You moan and groan and start thinking about getting a shiny new computer.

Guess what. Getting a new computer may be fun, it may have more bells and whistles, but if you don't do some housekeeping, you will just be transferring your problems to a faster machine.

The Solution

Bite the bullet and plan a massive fall (summer, spring, or winter) cleaning and organizing project. It really isn't hard -- it just takes will and perseverance.

10 Steps to Success

1. Reboot your computer.
2. Back up your computer before you start.
3. Check your internal drive to see how much free space is available. You should have 15-20% free space or your computer will slow down. If you have less, you must delete files or move them to an external drive. The *Manage Storage* tab in *About This Mac* (click Apple icon > Storage > Manage) will help you understand what you have on your drive.
4. Clean out your *Downloads* folder. If there are files you want to save, move them to the appropriate place in *Documents*, *Pictures*, *Movies*, or *Music*. You should strive for an empty folder.
5. Clean out your *Desktop* folder. If there are files you want to save, move them to the appropriate place in *Documents*, *Pictures*, *Movies*, or *Music*. You should strive for an empty folder. Having lots of files and folders on your Desktop can potentially slow your computer down.
6. Eliminate duplicates. Use an app like [DupeGuru - Duplicate file scanner](#), [Duplicate Detective](#), or [Duplicate File Finder Remover on the Mac App Store](#) to help. Take your time doing this to avoid errors and don't even start until you have a current backup.
7. Create an *Archive* folder on an external drive and move files you may never need, but don't want to part with to this drive. You can do this on your main drive if you have a lot of free space, but it is better to put it on an external drive.
8. Organize your *Documents* folder. Sit down with a blank sheet of paper and make a list of top-level categories you can use to organize your files. Categories like: financial, family records, planning, vacations, genealogy, reference documents, etc. Think about sub-categories for each of these. Then

create a folder structure using these categories and move your document into the appropriate place.

9. Eliminate cruft. Cruft is the term used to describe all the little files, caches, and unneeded bits of information that build up. Use an app like [CleanMyMac X](#) or [OnyX](#) to do this. CleanMyMac X is available from the developer or from [Setapp](#); OnyX is free. Warning -- do not use MacKeeper, which claims to do this, but will invade your computer.
10. Sit back and enjoy your newly reborn computer!