



Get ahead

Organize your junk drawer

Tame that tangle of phone chargers, paper clips and receipts for good with these tips.

✓ Dump the drawer out; decide what stays or goes

Spread the contents on your kitchen table or a counter so you can see what you're dealing with. Toss obvious trash—dried-out pens, drained batteries. Put duplicates of items like scissors and pens (do you really need 30?) as well as objects you're unlikely to use in the short term in a large ziplock bag and stash it in a closet or high cabinet. (If you never open that bag, it's proof the items weren't worthy of keeping in easy reach.) The junk drawer is best for things you use often.

✓ Divide and conquer

The key to keeping junk-drawer chaos at bay is to partition the real estate into compartments of varying sizes. Buy a premade organizer (for suggestions, see below) or make one yourself: Fill the drawer with old jewelry or checkbook boxes, or plastic takeout or Tupperware containers. Make sure they fit snugly and don't shift around. For small items—paper clips, safety pins, rubber bands—use an ice-cube tray, a muffin tin or the bottom of an egg carton.

✓ Corral your cords

The explosion of electronics in our homes has filled drawers with cords that only sometimes need to be plugged in. The solution: Neatly loop each cord and insert it inside a toilet-paper tube. Label the tubes (e-reader, digital camera, etc.) to cut down on confusion.

✓ Separate your papers

To keep stray receipts, recipes, coupons and takeout menus from becoming hopelessly intermingled, clip each type together—a clothespin works. Throw out receipts for credit card purchases (your statement offers proof of transactions) or at least place them in an envelope. Set aside business cards so you can enter the information into your laptop, smartphone or Rolodex.



Leave open a "wild card" compartment

Even when your junk drawer is under control, new flotsam and jetsam, from ticket stubs to buttons, will inevitably drift in. Give them a landing zone so they won't clutter the rest of the drawer. Then, when you have time, figure out where to move them—to your sewing basket, say, or your scrapbook.

Three ways to conquer a cluttered drawer

BOX IT UP

These Blue Pippi organizers (7" L x 7" W x 4" H, \$8 for 2; 14" L x 7" W x 4" H, \$6; containerstore.com) can keep your items stylish and separate.



LOCK IT DOWN

The Oxo Good Grips adjustable organizer (12"—20" W x 16½" L x 2¼" H, \$25; oxo.com) comes with nonslip feet so it won't slide inside the drawer.



SHIFT IT AROUND

Rationell adjustable dividers (20" L x 1¾" W x 1½" D, \$13; ikea.com) will fit a variety of drawer sizes and objects.

