

## 5 Tips on How to Find Your Paperwork in 30 Seconds or Less

Volumes of information are thrown at us each day, turning us into “*information overload zombies*.” We’re constantly gathering information because we have a project to do, or we print it in case we “might” need it later. Whoa! Now **WHAT** do we do with all this information and **HOW** do we categorize it?

Here are 5 tips on how to sort and categorize your paperwork into what I call a “*neat mess*.”™

1. **Make up general category names:** Data Entry, Call Backs (waiting answers), Meeting Munchies (make it fun), Gotta Do or Else, What Would I Do If I Won the Lotto?, Just for Me, etc.
2. **You might want to color code these files.** I find that people relate to “colors” first, “pictures” second, and then “words” last. Color coding can be very effective, because we don’t always remember the name of the file, but we usually remember the color of the file we were working on.
3. **Decide if you really need it or can get it from another source later.** If you think you might use it later, title a piece of paper called “Where Did I Put That?” Write the date in the 1<sup>st</sup> column, the description of the item in the 2<sup>nd</sup> column, and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> column, where you can get that information.
4. **For papers that need follow up now, put those items in a tickler system.** Write the due date on the upper right hand corner of the paper. Put that information into the July Pendaflex hanging file (for instance) or in a Desktop File folder (Jan-December, 1-31) on top of your desk (vertically). Then write where you put that paperwork on your paper calendar or input into the information into your electronic calendar.
5. **Now that’s what I call a “neat mess”™.** Placing the paperwork into categories so the paper can easily be referenced later, is the key to finding your paperwork in 30 seconds or less. It doesn’t matter what order, only that the paperwork is put into a category that you can remember.

6. Creating a working environment based on the “kindergarten method” of activity zones based on how we relate to our papers and things can make us more productive. Have fun and start turning **YOUR “piles into files.”**

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