

# Out With the Old and in With the New— Top Organizational Tips for 2004



(NAPSA)—This time of year the craving to clean is right up there with idle thoughts of blooming lilacs and buzzing bees.

According to a recent survey conducted by Microsoft Corp., 81 percent of Americans will clean annually, inspired by a desire for space, weariness with clutter, or pressure from friends or family, not to mention inspiration from popular home makeover shows. How do you tackle the task, especially when you're already pressed for time and feel overwhelmed? That's a tough question if everything from your garage and pantry to your closet seems like it's bulging with unwanted items.

The top areas and items in the home Americans would most like to clean out and organize include their closets and their photos. In fact, 45 percent of U.S. households have one to five shoeboxes jam-packed with photos, and many Americans believe that their PC is a great way to help them get organized. To help shed some light on this topic, organizational expert Peter Walsh, who wades through large-scale disorganization on TLC's popular series "Clean Sweep," offers his top five organizational tips:

- To keep from feeling overwhelmed and ensure clutter doesn't get the upper hand, minipurge your home every six months.

- Although photos are treasured for the memories they trigger, duplicates and out-of-focus prints just create more clutter. To bring order to disarray without losing sentimental value, use a scanner to copy photos onto your personal computer. Because most photos are usually of poor quality, just save negatives of photos of precious memories and scan all the other photos (don't forget to back up your computer). Devices such as Media Center PCs are a great way to organize all your photos and show slide shows to friends and family.

- Make a date to cull your collection of DVDs and videotapes every six months. Get rid of all those VCR tapes of your favorite shows, and use a personal computer to record and store your shows for easy access.

- Record albums are great if you use them; if not, they are just clutter in our digital world of CDs. Move all your favorites onto the PC.

- Purchase a paper shredder. Shredders have come down dramatically in size and price, making them an excellent way to shed old bills, receipts and bank statements without worrying about your personal information falling into the wrong hands. And with the ease of online banking services, why even bother with paper bills? Use your PC to help clear the paper waste.

"New and smaller technology can help you get rid of bulky stereo and TV equipment," Walsh said. "Today, personal computers come in all shapes and sizes, making it easy to reduce clutter and gain more space."

Ultimately, we are all looking for ways to make our lives easier and to consolidate all our "stuff," and in today's digital world 25 percent of Americans are very satisfied with the organization of their entertainment including DVDs and CDs, while 48 percent are stuck under a messy pile of old videotapes, cassettes and eight-track tapes. New compact technology can also help you make better use of space made cramped by bulky stereo and TV equipment. All-in-one entertainment and computing devices such as Windows XP Media Center Edition PCs allow pack rats to store their favorite CDs, digital photos, recorded TV clips and computer files in one place. Walsh adds that once you've created alternative storage for your CDs, you can liberate more space by getting rid of the cases they arrived in. As for your computer, remember that technology is constantly changing, so to keep from getting "digital overload" make it a routine to update any outdated hardware and software regularly. Ideally, sell it or donate it to a school or charity.

Find more organizing tips at <http://www.discovery.com/> by clicking on TLC. For more information about Windows XP Media Center PCs, visit <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/mediacenter/>.