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7 Simple Steps to Organize Your Mail

1. Who opens the mail in your family? Who pays the bills and files any permanent paper? It's best if one spouse or one person takes this job on. Dividing up the tasks leaves room for inconsistency and error. So, if you or your spouse has a stronger organizational background give this job to whoever will have a better handle on it. An organizing system is built around and set up for the family member who is responsible to sort and go through the mail. That person should be present during the actual organizing and cleaning up process. This ensures any system or decisions made on what to keep or toss is enforced and understood.
2. Start with the newest mail first. If there's mail there from months ago or even a year or two ago, start with today's mail or yesterday's mail. This will change current habits and systems to ensure going forward that processing mail will be better. The old piles, bags, and drawers of paper in the basement aren't going anywhere. Work from front to back with mail.
3. Always open every piece of mail even if you know what it is. Discard the filler advertisements and envelopes- just keep what you need. This filler and the envelopes adds 50% if you file without opening it. So, tossing this stuff cuts down on paper by half!
4. Look for what you can eliminate from showing up in the mail next month. What can go paperless? What can be automated? Make a pile and slowing work your way through setting up passwords, usernames and online profiles to achieve paperless and automated status.
5. For paper you must take action on, sort it into action verbs that you can identify with OR make a list in your phone, take a picture of the action paper and discard it. For physical action files, I'd say pick no more than five of these ideas/categories.
 - To Do (urgent & non-urgent)
 - To File (At this point there should be little to file but some permanent household records or tax records will need to be kept safe.)
 - To Decide & Discuss
 - To Read
 - To Pay
 - To Call
 - To Enter (into contact management software)
 - Recycle or Shred
 - Pending/Waiting on
6. Once you come up with the action verbs that make the most sense for you or your spouse -find trays, bins, file folders, or containers to label with those action verbs. That is where you will sort your mail into every day. Yes, I said every day. Open and sort through ALL the mail every day. Then when you want to pay your bills you have them all safe and sound, or then when you have time to read you'll grab something from your stack of reading, etc.
7. Another helpful trick is to strategically position your shredder and garbage in a convenient place which will make it easy to toss and shred the mail daily. Creating a small mail zone in your kitchen, mudroom or by the front door will help maintain the system.