



Space and Time, L.L.C.®

Betsy Peterson, Professional Organizer

207-7295 bpeterson@space-and-time.com

PO Box 4325, Oak Ridge, TN 37831

From, Betsy Peterson, "Getting Organized"
Article for Visions Magazine, September 2006 Issue

Keeping the memories

Taking pictures of summer fun and family vacations is an automatic for most people. Photos come home in their packet with the negatives; we share them with friends and relatives and then shove them into a drawer or box with all of the others. Digital cameras are a wonderful thing, but what do you do when your flash card is full? How many of you have years of "photo backlog" hiding in a drawer or box in the back of the closet? How many of you have photos on your PC desk top and aren't really sure what to do next? I tend to agree with Julie Morgenstern's claim that organizing photos provides one of the biggest payoffs in terms of satisfaction, joy, and freedom.

Photographs can be a lifetime of memories and a valuable record of the past. Some people scrapbook and this is a noble and very rewarding endeavor, but most of us do not have the time or talent. Don't despair! You don't have to be fancy to get your photos under control. If you decide that you want to get your family photos in order, make a commitment to work on it regularly, a little at a time, to get the task done. For those of you that do have boxes and drawers of photos (inherited photos and albums included) gather them all in one place, set up a table and categorize.

Begin with a quick initial sort and label your piles as you work. Inexpensive small baskets can be helpful for this task. Group photos into broad categories. The extent of your backlog will help determine the categories. The further back, the more time consuming it may be to sort chronologically so categories such as families, events or decades may be better suited. Before you separate negatives from the photos label the packet. Some organizers suggest keeping negatives in a separate place as insurance against theft, fire or other loss.

It is estimated that it will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes a roll to sort and place in an album. However, depending on how many photos you keep, photo boxes are one of the best ways to consolidate and keep them. For each year of backlog you may need two to three archival-quality photo boxes (they look like shoe boxes). Put the groupings into your new photo boxes and label the boxes. Make sure that you have an empty box ready for the photos yet to come. Once you have your photos together in boxes, they can be sorted, shared, put into albums or just simply kept in the boxes.

For those of you with digital cameras, the sooner you decide what system you would like to have for sorting and storing your photos the better. Digital clutter can be a bad thing, maybe even more so than household clutter, because it can use up hard-drive

space faster than we care to admit. Suffice it to say that that you will be far ahead of the game if you invest a few hours to become familiar with a few essentials such as:

- deleting bad shots as they occur
- obtaining a software that will enable you to edit and organize your photos
- determine how you will blend your digital and paper worlds

If you just can not get motivated to start the big sort, for the time being, start with your most recent set of pictures and devise a system to sort and store them. If you never have time to get your photos into an album, you're ahead of the game if you organize and document them on an on going basis. Once you have devised a system you can continue into the future and break the cycle. Throw away the photos you don't like, label them with the date, people and event as the photos come in, either paper or digital. Many photo processors offer the option of having your film digitized and put on a diskette. This is a compact way to store your photos and you can then print only the pictures that you want. The family photos are important and you may not have the time to organize them as perfectly as you would like to, but sorting, consolidating and boxing them will protect them and it will enable you to enjoy them. Happy shooting and sorting!

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About the author

Betsy Peterson is a local professional organizer and owner of Space and Time, LLC. She is a member of the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO) and specializes in home and office organizing. She can be reached for questions at 865-207-7295 or by e-mail at bpeterson@space-and-time.com.