

ask the organizer

What's the best fix for a chaotic command center, unsorted snapshots, and COA (chronic organizing avoidance)? Decluttering pro **ERIN DOLAND** has the answers.

got a question? Submit it at realsimple.com/organizing.

I have 20 years' worth of photos all mixed up in bins, drawers, and boxes that I just can't get in order. Please give me some kind of organizing plan!

—Susan R.

To get past the stalling and into a productive process, start by dumping all your photos into one container and sending them to a digitizing service like ScanMyPhotos.com [click on "Photo Scanning" under Services & Products]. It costs \$99 for all you can fit into the box that's provided, which holds at least 1,800 standard photos. You can create a digital library of them, then deal with the paper photos later. Within 10 days, you'll receive a DVD of all the images, plus the originals. The next step involves man-hours, but it's worth it.

organized. Anytime you take new pictures, upload and tag them the same way. If you back them up with a service like iCloud, technically you don't have to keep the loose pictures, which take up a lot of physical space. But it's hard to throw them out. If you want to hold on to yours, it's easiest to sort by year and, within each year, by event. Instead of saving them in bulky albums, try a photo caddy, like the Metal Edge QPO [\$54, archivalmethods.com]. It's the size of a shoe box, and it holds up to 2,400 pictures in protective archival envelopes.

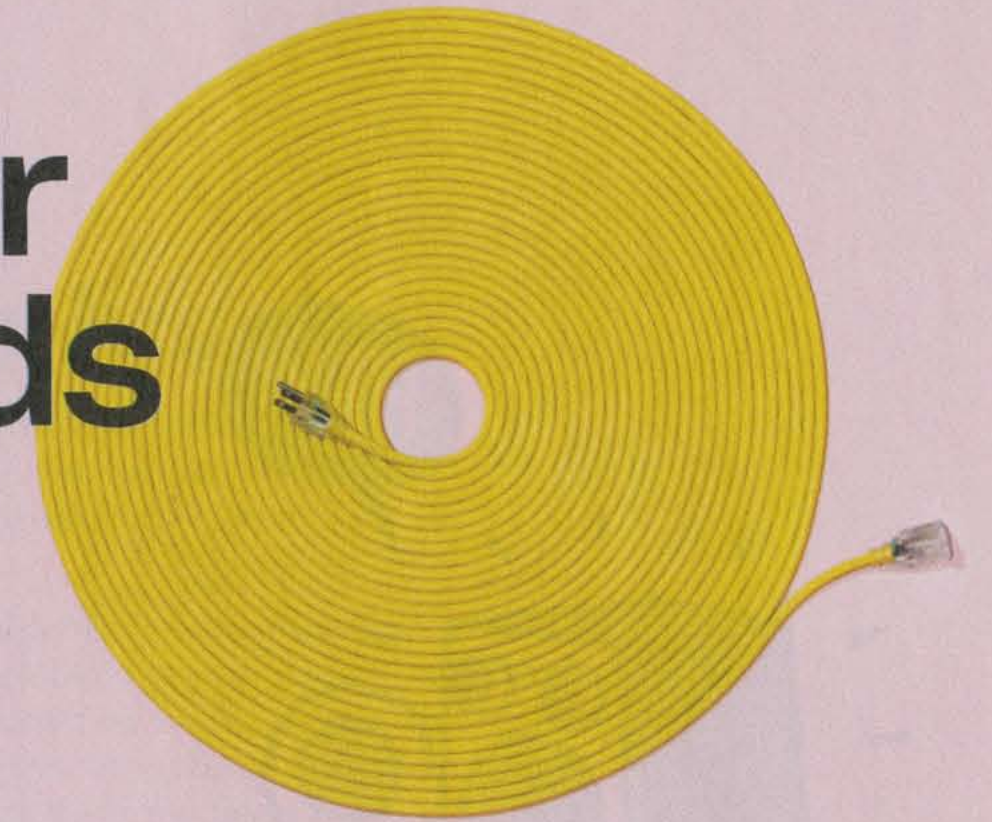
Two seconds after starting a task on my to-do list, I get distracted by something else that needs to get done and end up accomplishing nothing. I need tips for staying motivated and seeing things through.

—Kelly L.

One reason people have trouble checking off to-dos is that they don't plan a defined time in which to accomplish the task. Even if it's just putting



Bring order to the cords



"ISN'T THIS THE cord to the PS2? We don't have a PS2 anymore. Or is this the cord to the photo printer?" I am in our home office talking to my husband, who has stopped listening. I don't blame him.

We supposedly live in a wireless world, but we have a drawer full of cords. Most of the time I'm scared to look inside. The contents look back at me like cyber snakes. There are black cords, white cords, a thin, clear cord with even thinner colored cords inside. That one's actually kind of pretty, but what does it click into? No one knows, and yet we can't make ourselves toss them.

My husband has more cord-based gear

about as fulfilling as figuring out a new spice rack system. Sometimes I don't want to have that conversation—or that marriage.

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25-WORD TIP
Been meaning to preserve your old photos? Digitize all your printed images with a service like ScanMyPhotos.com and back them up on a cloud-based system.

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Tackle email in the stray 10 minutes between other tasks. When you have 20-plus minutes, do a task that requires more focus.
—KATE ROCKWOOD