

Going Paperless at Home

Some of you may already be fully paperless, others may want to go paperless but don't know where to start, while some are still managing money with envelopes and folders.



While getting rid of all the paper in your home or office still isn't possible in a world where receipts, birth certificates, house deeds, and other important printed information still needs to be on-hand, the following are some tips and strategies that can help you to go paperless. Pick and choose the ones that work best for you and your family. After all, your plan to go paperless must be relevant to your lifestyle.

Type Notes – Instead of lists and “stickies,” think about jotting down notes into the Notes app on your smartphone or tablet and sync them across all your devices and your computer.

Take Advantage of Digital Receipts – A number of retail businesses offer the option of having your receipt e-mailed to you. Once received, you can file on your computer.

Sign Up for E-Statements – Instead of receiving paper statements each month, companies can send electronic statements and bills to your e-mail. Entities offering electronic statements include banks, cable companies, and utility companies. It can take time to set up online accounts and receive your statements and bills electronically, but you will immediately see a reduction of paper coming into your home.

Some e-mail programs (i.e. Microsoft Outlook, Gmail) allow you to “tag” or “mark” incoming emails to a specific folder. You can tag these electronic bills and statements as “Paperless” and leave them in the folder until you are ready to download or “file” them on your computer. If you cannot tag or mark your incoming e-mails, you can just as easily set up a separate folder and move these e-mails into the folder. And remember, there is no need to print since you have an electronic copy of your statement.



Financial Planning

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Pay Bills Online – It may not seem like much to switch from your traditional paper bills but the impact can be huge. Electronic billing options are easier to keep track of and provide a lot more value than their paper counterparts. The benefits include being able to receive auto reminders, helping you avoid late payment penalties and save postage.

Scan – Not only will you have less in your file cabinet, you’ll also be able to find all your data much faster, given you actually take the time to come up with a naming and storage method. Using a scanner, you can remove paper clutter, save space, eliminate file cabinets and folders, find and e-mail documents faster and easier.

Backup – It’s important to have a good backup system in case your hard drive fails or computer crashes. While fires, flood, and coffee spills can happen to paper, computer disasters are also possible. You should back up your files on an external hard drive or use an online storage service.

Shred – After you have scanned and backed up, you can shred the documents you no longer need.

Remember, this is a long-term project. Don’t try to sort and organize every paper in your entire home in one day. Continue working and let the amount of paper in your home set the pace for the project. ■

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