

THE ODDS AND ENDS OF ZEN

The nearest junk drawer might seem like the last place on earth you'd go to clear your mind and lower your stress levels. Time to rethink that.

By Lisa Haney

Drawers attract dark matter—broken pens, old beach passes—with the force of a black hole. So many reasons *not* to get sucked in with it: A UCLA study found that women who described their homes as cluttered had high levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Chaotic spaces make you feel as if life is chaotic too, says Toby Israel, Ph.D., a design psychologist in Princeton, New Jersey.

Orderly spaces have the opposite effect, and the best (and fastest) place to start is a contained area, like those pesky drawers in your kitchen, bathroom, and office. “Keeping them

tidy sends a calming signal that ‘life is organized,’” Israel says. Reducing “visual complexity” also puts you in a better mood, aiding problem-solving, says Sally Augustin, Ph.D., an environmental and design psychologist in La Grange Park, Illinois.

Where to start? By renaming them! A “junk drawer” is a dumping ground; a “utility drawer” is a high-priority space for only the most useful items. Might we suggest something even loftier? Perhaps an “oasis of calm”? With smart edits and a few key additions, you can add order to any universe.

**HOLD IT**

Boxes made from environmentally friendly bamboo are an ideal match for kitchen drawers—it's more durable than wood and easily cleaned with soap and water. Stackable Bamboo Drawer Organizers, from \$4, containerstore.com

KITCHEN

1/ GADGETS Stash high-use items—chip-bag clips, bottle openers—together. Include a postcard or photo from a trip or favorite place and you'll get a jolt of feel-good chemicals every time you open the drawer.

2/ WRITING MATERIALS One ballpoint pen, one Sharpie (for marking freezer packages or kids' lunches), and Post-its for fridge notes.

3/ SPECIAL-OCCASION ITEMS Corral the small things you use only now and then,

like birthday candles and cooking twine.

4/ KEYS Car and spare house ones—that's it!

5/ FLASHLIGHT Give it a front spot so you can find it in the dark, along with batteries in two sizes (just four to six total).

6/ CORDS Fold charger cords (just one for each device) to avoid tangling, and add a portable charger for those moments you're heading out with a fast-fading phone.

7/ TOOLS Only the essentials for quick

fixes: measuring tape, two different-size screwdrivers—one reversible with both Phillips and slotted heads—and scissors. (The rest belong in a toolbox.) Single-use tubes of Krazy Glue are handy for emergencies.

**HOLD IT**

Plastic bins can stand up to household cleaners, and blue bottoms don't show dirt as easily as pure white ones. Choose rounded edges for a relaxing vibe—people find it comforting to look at curving contours.

Clear & Aqua Drawer Organizer Trays, from \$2, containerstore.com

BATHROOM

1/ NAIL AND BROW ACCESSORIES Sharp objects like tweezers, scissors, and clippers can share a bin, along with mini nail files.

2/ RAZORS Humidity dulls blades, so don't leave your stash out in the open.

3/ COTTON BALLS/ SWABS These can cozy up together for quick cosmetic use.

4/ FIRST-AID BASICS Keep a few Band-Aids and antiseptic ointment like Neosporin for small cuts and scrapes; a larger range

of supplies belongs in a proper first-aid kit.

5/ BEAUTY TOOLS Store makeup brushes and applicators together.

6/ HAIR CARE Your most-used brush, comb, and clip go here; specialized brushes can hang elsewhere.

7/ LINT BRUSH Everything in a bin—with an exception: odd-shaped items, like this roller. Wind ponytail holders around the handle to secure them. Throw in a scent packet for an aromatherapy hit!

8/ MAKEUP Gloss, mascara, foundation: only stuff you use every day, please! Rotate in seasonal items—say, brighter colors for spring—and add something luxe, like this antique compact, as a visual pick-me-up.



HOLD IT
Copper wire baskets of various sizes give you more flexibility than a desk-organizer tray (plus, they're just cooler). Rectangular contours denote efficiency—a subliminal reminder that you *do* have your sh-t together. Copper Wire Drawer Organizers, from \$6, copperwire.com

All Clear!

Every drawer makeover begins with the same five steps.



1. Dump everything out and clean the interior. Consider adding liners for a hit of color or pattern—some are even scented.



2. Sort like with like—multiples of pens, tape measures, etc. Divide the useful items from anything you can toss or recycle (old takeout menus, expired coupons).



3. Decide which of those useful items stay in the drawer and which can go somewhere else. Things you use infrequently? Off to the closet!



4. Measure the drawer and pick organizing bins that fit. Don't forget to measure depth. If your drawer is deep, you can stack bins near the back to maximize space.



5. Add the bins and start filling. Aim for balance: Too much clutter makes people tense, but so does a box that's too barren. You want a curated set of important items. ■

OFFICE

1/ MAKEUP Keep what you need for touch-ups: lip balm, gloss, mascara, and powder.

2/ PENS AND SCISSORS A few of your favorite writing tools, plus highlighters and a compact pair of scissors.

3/ BREATH AIDS For after lunch or before a meeting!

4/ SACHET Lavender is known to be calming—a salve on busy days.

5/ TAPE DISPENSER A vivid color is mood-boosting.

6/ FUN TAPE Ever want to feel like you're playing while working? These patterned tapes will take you there.

7/ SLEEK STAPLER A shiny metal one that matches the bronze tones of the bins

reduces visual clutter, so you feel less stressed. Store a single pack of staples with it.

8/ ORGANIZING SUPPLIES Put paper clips, binder clips, and push pins in separate small plastic boxes;

give page flags their own bin; and keep your to-do list handy. Replenish from the supply closet as needed. **9/ SOMETHING GRAPHIC** This bold, oversize ruler is plain ol' eye candy.