

Three Steps To Clear Your Head

1: Get It Out of Your Head And On Paper

Why paper? It's the most accessible and quickest way to capture thoughts and ideas. A major study showed that (I'm paraphrasing here) your brain is like a four-year-old, begging for your attention at the worst times and places, asking repeatedly until you answer it. *So no matter how minor it seems,*

- 1) **Write it down**; try using one page per item (trust me)
- 2) **Don't judge it** (easy/difficult, should be done first, et al.); this will come later

Advanced Tip: Try to **use an action word as the first word** in describing the thought, if applicable (more on this in Tip 2).

Regardless, write it down, even "Mom's birthday Saturday", for example.

2: Evaluate Briefly:

Can You Take Action?

Your brain gets overwhelmed by a to-do list of so many items with different requirements.

Trying to act on one, then having to detour ("oh yeah, I have to do this first"), then pick up where you left off is frustrating. Repeating the cycle tires your brain (and you) out!

- 1) **Decide whether you can act on it**; some things are reference materials for future
 - a) **Can't act? Set those aside** for now, unless they are reminders of a future scheduled event; make an "Calendar" subgroup for them.
 - b) **Can act? on to #2**
- 2) Does it **involve more than 1 action**? (again, Mom's birthday Saturday: Call? Buy/create a card? Mail/email a card? (Buy stamps?...) Buy a gift?
 - a) One action? (You guessed it) Write it down.

(over)

b) More than 1?

- 1) **What's the desired result? Write it down first;** use the back of the card for this--it works really well to keep your focus.
- 2) **Write down the required actions** (see the example above) as they occur to you--don't think about their order yet.
- 3) **Determine the first action** (it may be a small one), the one that makes sense to start with. (More on this later in your bonus steps!)

3: Keep Your Notes In As Few Safe Places As Possible

This reminds or re-trains your brain that it doesn't have to hold all those items; they won't be lost if you set up a safe system. Your to-do list may not have worked for you before because you lost or forgot to do something important, so your brain took over again and tried to manage everything by itself.

Whatever form you use (printable lists, a notebook, et al.),

- 1) **Have as few piles or notepads as possible** where you can find them quickly("safe" places).*

That way, the grocery list gets to the store with you rather than being left at home! (smile)

- 2) **Make it portable** so you can take just what you need;

a) like a grocery list, just take the "at town" pages with you (An advanced tip on this later in your bonus steps!); leave the "at home" pages behind

b) keep fresh blank pages with you

(The (vertically) lined index cards are convenient for me, bound together, thrown in my purse (or backpack)).

*Sounds simple, but it's not necessarily easy, I know.

Hope these steps have started to help get your mind clear and keep it that way.
Watch for your bonus steps in your secret mission email!

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