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Linda's Organizing Tip for June 2007:

The Importance of Labels!

la·bel



- n.* An item used to identify something or someone, as a small piece of paper or cloth attached to an article to designate its origin, owner, contents, use, or destination.
- v.* To set off by or as if by a mark indicating ownership or manufacture: brand, identify, mark, tag, trademark. www.yourdictionary.com

Have you tried over and over to get organized, only to find that you end up doing things the same way as before? Maybe you have underestimated the importance of the label. Many people do. They have great intentions, but somehow, nothing makes it back into the assigned home.

The label is a key element to the successful maintenance of any organizing process. Before you embark on your next project, consider the following thoughts.

1. **Labels clarify the category:** Once you have gone through the trouble of deciding what Zones and Categories you will need, purged and assigned your homes to your items (topics covered in previous Tips and available on my website), labeling is the next step. A label on a shelf indicates to everyone what kinds of things go there, and what does not. For example, one client told me that she instantly found her thermometer in the bin labeled "Medical Items" during a recent illness. She said that she was thrilled at being able to find what she needed so easily, and it helped her feel better and less stressed.
2. **Labels communicate to everyone, without nagging:** If you have a busy family, or more than one person using an area (like the pantry, refrigerator, bathroom cabinets, etc.) labels can provide a gently repeating reminder about where things belong, without shouting, shaming or harping. Even very young children have a natural appreciation of order and enjoy the reinforcement of the label. My husband, daughter and I recently volunteered to watch the 3 & 4 year olds during our church service. We were in an unfamiliar preschool room, and the dozen or so children got out every toy in the room. When it was clean up time, we were very appreciative of the regular teachers' efforts to put a picture label on every shelf, indicating what category of toy belonged on it. Old and young pitched in and were able to put the room back together again. In a situation such as this, where the helpers change often (another example- is in the church kitchen during coffee hour) it may be helpful to have a very visible sign (on brightly colored paper) reminding helpers to read the labels to know where things go. (Click here to view a [Stand up Sign Holder](#) from Office Max, approximately \$4.00.)

3. **Labels train the brain:** When viewing a label, the brain is able to process and act in a split second, rather than think a series of questions or thoughts, such as; What is this? Where are the things like it? Is there room for this? Etc. When labels are used over time, the brain learns to go straight to the location and a type of memory called kinesthetic memory is formed, rapidly increasing efficiency.
4. **Labels stimulate creativity:** When labels are used effectively, they allow items that can be used together, to be integrated in an orderly way. This allows for an unlimited potential of combinations. For example, in my daughter's art center, she has many bins of craft materials, including labels for pipe cleaners, ribbons, craft paper, ink stamps, stickers, small craft supplies, glue gun, etc. She accesses these bins regularly, and they are used in differing combinations to produce all kinds of very exciting home and school projects. When she finishes, (truthfully, sometimes the process goes on for a week or more and somehow I am able to tolerate that!) she is able to put everything back where it belongs for future use.
5. **Labels encourage independence:** I am a huge believer in teaching skills to others so they can use them. My goal as a Professional Organizer is to produce that kind of independence and confidence in my clients. Those of you who have worked with me know that I strongly recommend the purchase of a label maker for each client. As soon as possible, I train my clients in how to use it and get them making labels! Many of you have been very excited and motivated by the ease with which a crisp, clean label can be made, and then changed as things evolve. In fact, some clients have purchased second label makers for their business offices, so they can stay organized at home and work.
6. **Labels look great:** When made with a label maker in the same font, size and style, there is no question, that labels look great. Some people are gifted with beautiful handwriting. I am not, and try as I might; I am never able to achieve the smooth, polished look I want. With a label maker in my hand, I can be immediately successful! My clients tell me they get much pleasure from looking at a nicely labeled system. I described in earlier tips about the potential negative and positive energy generated by our feelings and attachments to our "stuff." The positive energy generated by a well labeled system is highly motivating for maintaining that system.

My personal favorite label maker is the Dymo LectraTag (which happens to be a Rolodex product). It can be purchased at Target for about \$20. They also have a 2 pack of White paper tape for \$7.00 which is needed if you are going to be doing a lot of file labels. I recommend using the "Small" or "Medium" size for printing, as the larger will use up lots of tape. (Here is a link so you can see the [Dymo](#).)

If you need help with labeling or any other organizing project, call Linda 631-5619.

*Please forward this tip to those you know who may be interested in organizing services.
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