

Clearing the desk

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We are living in a world that is 'on' 24/7. Our ability to concentrate is down to a slither¹. Materially reducing interruptions and distractions improves focus and returns time.

Visual clutter on desks draws our attention away from the task at hand and our brain starts thinking about other things, so in essence, multi-tasking. Multi-tasking extends the time it takes to get things done and impacts quality.

Steps

Bring no judgement to this work, rather enjoy the satisfaction that comes from decluttering.

Preparation

1. Have a large document disposal container nearby.
2. Have one cupboard for anything essential that cannot be saved digitally.
3. Have one under-desk cabinet if needed.

Guiding rules

- a) If you're not 90% sure you need it, dispose of it².
- b) Know and follow your organisation's filing policies, systems, and rules (try to file most things digitally).
- c) Thank everything you are disposing of for its usefulness up till now, have a plan for disposal, dispose³.

Guiding questions

- a) When did I last use this?
- b) In all honesty am I likely to need it in the foreseeable future?
- c) Can I access it another way if I dispose of it and end up needing it?

Process

1. **Measure:** step back and assess everything on and under your desk; take a photo.
2. **Minimise:** ruthlessly cull everything but the documents, reference material, and equipment that are essential to do your job.

¹ Deep Work by Cal Newport

² Greg McKeown: <https://gregmckeown.com/about/>

³ Marie Condo: <https://konmari.com/>

Retain on your desk

- a) computer, screens, mouse and keypad, mobile phone, pens container
 - b) the one thing you are working on
3. **Migrate:** use the same filing system for hard copy and digital files (example below); store anything else you want to keep in a cupboard (out of sight).
- **Pending:** things you are waiting on for others
 - **People:** meetings with others
 - **Projects:** work in progress
 - **Personal:** positive feedback is nice here
 - **Process:** internal admin (ideally digitally filed).
4. **Maintain:** check and clear daily.

Further reading

For further reading, please [click here](#).