

An Extra Organised Year

52 ways to get extra organised

To celebrate the first twelve months of the [Extra Organised](#) blog, I've collected 52 of the best ideas from the blog into an actionable weekly guide.

Being extra organised is about organising what matters, in a way that makes a difference, and living deeply. It's finding inspiration all around us and using it to live a focused, thoughtful life centred on relationships and experiences.

It's definitely not about perfection, but engaging with life (and its glory and mess) exactly as we find it, and shaping our priorities, our environment, and our tools to support our individual needs and passions.

You may also like to take a look at the free introduction to my ebook [Extra Organised: Using the best of organising to shape a meaningful life](#), or browse the Extra Organised [archives](#).

Now, let's get started. Enjoy life lived the extra organised way!

Week 1: Align your life with your priorities

What is important to you, at this moment in your life? Over the next twelve months, aim to gradually bring the way you spend your time into alignment with these things. To help identify your core priorities, think about the following questions:

- What are your top five priorities?
- From a friend's perspective, what would they say your top five priorities are?
- Does the way you spend your time reflect either list?
- Is there anything getting in the way of your priorities? Is it worth it?

For more information, see the [welcome](#) post.

Week 2: Use your treasures

Bring a precious item into regular use for daily doses of joy. Find something special you have stored away and display or use it this week.

For more information, see the [everyday treasure](#) post.

Week 3: Reach an organising destination

Organise with purpose: figure out what you want to achieve; take the critical path (the simplest, most direct way); and stop and switch to maintenance when you see results.

Find an area of your life or home that needs an organising solution and try this approach. Go for simple rather than complicated, and set and stick to a finish line instead of continually tweaking.

For more information, see the [organising is a journey with a destination](#) post.

Week 4: Pre-sort your filing

Sort an out-of-control filing pile into trays that match the number of drawers or major categories in your filing system. Breaking this daunting task into small steps makes it easier to tackle section by section.

For more information, see the [pre-filing](#) post, or Lissanne Oliver's book, *Sorted! The ultimate guide to organising your life—once and for all* (Hardie Grant Books, 2007).

Week 5: Organise a supportive environment

Simplify your surroundings so you have little choice but to do what you love! Work toward having your environment reflect and support your priorities and interests so not only are you constantly reminded of what is important to you, but you also have ready access to everything you need to do it.

For more information, see the [organise a supportive environment](#) post.

Week 6: Edit your collections

The beauty of editing a collection—whether books, movies, music, or model cars—is that it will continually improve in quality and always reflect your current tastes. Set a limit on how much space the collection can take up, then each time you add something new, take away what no longer interests you.

For more information, see the [editing collections](#) post, or Francine Jay's book, *The joy of less: A minimalist living guide* (Anja Press, 2010).

Week 7: Practice underindulgence

Keep pleasure fresh by not overdoing what you love, whether that's exercise or thinking or shopping. Increase the intensity and depth of your favourite experiences, as well as build your motivation to enjoy them again, by leaving yourself wanting a bit more.

For more information, see the [underindulgence](#) post.

Week 8: Opt for functional decoration

When choosing an item for your home, look for both function and beauty. Combining the two saves space and brings more enjoyment each time you use the item. Examples include a statement soap dispenser, a crystal vase holding pencils or bookmarks, or a musical instrument on a stand.

For more information, see the [functional decoration](#) post.

Week 9: Time your tasks

Do each task at the right time for maximum impact. This week, as you go about a task, consider when the best time to do it might be. For example, clearing emails might be best in the afternoon during a low-energy period, and your laundry early in the morning when electricity is off-peak.

For more information, see the [time your tasks](#) post.

Week 10: Clear a surface

Clear surfaces support action. Make sure the surfaces you use most often—such as the kitchen bench, dining table and desk top—are either completely clear, or as empty as you can make them. Return them to clear either at the end of each task or each evening.

For more information, see the [clear surfaces](#) post.

Week 11: Minimise bathroom products

According to *Prevention* magazine, the average woman has 54 products in her makeup collection. Add up how many you have, and see if you can reduce to only those you use regularly. Using multipurpose products can cut the number even further. Men can do this as well with their bathroom products.

For more information, see the [cosmetic count](#) post.

Week 12: Set up an undecided container

Clear unmade decisions out of your home by putting incomplete items, or possessions you're unsure about, into an undecided container. Instead of agonising over decisions when you declutter, transfer ambiguous stuff straight to this container to get them out of your prime living space. Then go back and action them later.

For more information, see the [undecided container](#) post.

Week 13: Practice creative procrastination

Procrastination doesn't always have to be a negative concept. If something really needs to be done, sure, you should find a way to go ahead and do it. But challenge yourself to see if you can drop, put off, or delegate anything else you are procrastinating on—especially if given the choice again, you wouldn't have bought it or agreed to do it.

For more information, see the [creative procrastination](#) post, or Brian Tracy's book, *Eat that frog! Get more of the important things done—today!* (Hodder and Stoughton Ltd, 2004).

Week 14: Shop at home

Before going out to buy, see what you already have at home—you might already have what you need, or can make do with something that serves a similar purpose. If you love to read, you probably have several unread books on your shelves to enjoy before you need to buy another. If you want to go clothes shopping, there could be many new outfit combinations to make from your existing wardrobe.

For more information, see the [shopping at home for books](#) post.

Week 15: Set up a tea cupboard

I want you to set up an indulgent space for whatever it is you love to do. Even better if it's something you do daily. I love drinking tea, so I minimised my kitchen equipment until I had enough space to create my very own tea cupboard. I get a lot of pleasure opening the doors to those three shelves every day.

For more information, see the [tea cupboard](#) post.

Week 16: Balance pleasure and achievement

Do you naturally tend toward indulgence or accomplishment? Shake things up by strengthening your non-dominant style to bring your life more into balance. If you're all work, do something just for fun. If you like to indulge, knock some tasks off your to do list before relaxing so both get done.

For more information, see the [pleasure/achievement principle](#) post, or Chris Skellett's book, *When happiness is not enough* (Exisle Publishing, 2011).

Week 17: Declutter your hotspots

Some areas of life can be decluttered then kept in control by applying a principle such as the one in/one out rule. Other areas, such as paperwork or children's toys, will build up whenever your back is turned! Set a regular (even daily) routine for dealing with these clutter hotspots so they never become overwhelming again.

For more information, see the [clutter hotspots for advanced organisers](#) post.

Week 18: Refine your priority list

It's a great idea to have a list of four or five items that are important to you, that guide you in making decisions, and in channelling your time, money, and energy. Don't stop there though: examine your priority list and figure out what needs active attention, and what can run on autopilot for a while. We can't excel at everything important to us at once, and a clear and current list helps us focus on the best for right now.

For more information, see the [refined priority list](#) post.

Week 19: Rotate household tasks

Not every household task needs to be done weekly. If you feel like you're overdoing certain jobs, or repeatedly avoiding them, see if you can come up with a list of four or five tasks that you can rotate throughout a month. For example, gardening, ironing, mending, window sills, and skirting boards can all be rotated—one each week—so they all get done, but not too frequently!

For more information, see the [rotating cleaning tasks](#) post.

Week 20: Once-a-week lunchboxes

At the beginning of the week, make and freeze lunches (sandwiches or individual meal portions) and containerise snacks. In the mornings, each family member can grab their lunch box and fill it up from the ready-made choices.

For more information, see the [once-a-week lunchboxes](#) post.

Week 21: Write a to stop list

Clear some life clutter by checking in with yourself throughout a day and figuring out whether you want to stop doing any activities.

Perhaps you want to stop striving for perfection with your housework, checking emails every time they ping into your in box, or watching television mindlessly. Becoming conscious of what you want to stop in your life is a fast way to free up time.

For more information, see the [write a to stop list](#) post.

Week 22: Simplify your life purpose

Instead of attempting to define your life in a single overarching statement, look at the life you are in *right now*. You can only ever live your purpose in the present moment. Use your values to guide you, and concentrate on making a positive difference to the people you are with, and the circumstances you encounter. This is a simple, natural way to live your purpose, which will change and grow with you through your life.

For more information, see the [life purpose, simplified](#) post, or Eckhart Tolle's book, *A new earth: Create a better life* (Penguin Books, 2009).

Week 23: Organise for adventure

Don't just use your planning and organising skills to keep things humming along smoothly; apply them to injecting excitement and adventure into your life! This week, choose one thing you love to do, but are a bit scared of or rarely get around to doing, and organise to make it happen.

For more information, see the [organising for adventure](#) post.

Week 24: Shop mindfully

This week, be conscious of every step involved in the acquisition process. Plan a list and stick tightly to it. You can include wants as well as needs; it's more about deliberate decisions than self-denial. Use the week to practice shopping mindfully and delay unplanned purchases until you can properly evaluate them. Use the moment before checkout to review what's in your hands, trolley, or online shopping basket, and put back anything you weren't intending to buy. If you really want it, add it to next week's list and buy then if it doesn't drop off your list in the meantime.

For more information, see the [mindful shopping](#) post.

Week 25: Minimise clothing

It's quite straightforward to sort through clothing and remove anything worn out or that no longer fits. But just because a piece of clothing is beautiful, in good condition, and fits you doesn't mean you need to keep it if you don't love and wear it.

Too many choices mean things get worn less or not at all. Children's wardrobes are especially vulnerable to being over-stocked with suitable clothing. Keep enough in your (and your child's) wardrobe that you love and can reasonably wear in a week, month, season, or year, and gift the rest.

For more information, see the [minimising clothing](#) post, or Nicole Avery's book, *Planning with kids: A guide to organising the chaos and making time for family fun* (Wright Books, 2011).

Week 26: Improve tomorrow

Choose something you can do today, no matter how small, that will make tomorrow better. Maybe you could get started on an assignment, or plan and cook tomorrow night's dinner.

For more information, see the [improve tomorrow](#) challenge.

Week 27: Values over goals

Values are core beliefs that drive our behaviour, while goals conclude once we reach them. We can dip into an activity that reflects our values at any moment, and feel accomplishment and fulfilment. Choose one of your favourite values—such as creativity or generosity or spirituality—and enjoy an activity every day this week that expresses it.

For more information, see the [values over goals](#) post, or Russ Harris's book, *The reality slap* (Exisle Publishing, 2011).

Week 28: Set up an emergency present box

A last-minute invitation will be no drama when you have a small stash of lovely, all-purpose gifts to choose from in your cupboard. When you shop this week, look for quirky, individual gifts at a good price that you can stock your emergency present box with.

For more information, see the [emergency present box](#) post.

Week 29: Create a post-travel checklist

Many of us have a packing checklist and a list of things to do before a trip. A returning home checklist is a great way to streamline the transition from travel back to home. Write a list of things to do when you return from travelling, such as allowing a day or two to unpack, and setting aside time to catch up on laundry and paperwork.

For more information, see the [post-travel checklist](#) post.

Week 30: Get comfortable with the uncomfortable

It's not possible and nor is it ideal to keep everything neat and organised, all the time. Our possessions and schedules are meant to support and serve us, not the other way around. Stare down perfectionism and practice going with the flow by choosing to do (or not do) something that would ordinarily make you uncomfortable. Today, you might leave the bed unmade, dishes in the sink, or filing in the in tray—whatever you feel most 'compulsive' about so you can regain perspective.

For more information, see the [comfortable with the uncomfortable](#) challenge.

Week 31: Beat a deadline

Enjoy a double-hit of satisfaction by getting a task done early, then feeling smug when the original deadline rolls around and you've already taken care of it!

For more information, see the [beat a deadline](#) challenge.

Week 32: Read your unread library

Before buying or borrowing new books, commit to reading any that sit unread in your current collection, whether on your bookshelf or ereader. Go through your library this week and list or set aside any books you haven't yet read. If you are no longer interested in a book, let it go and free up space for one you really do want to read.

For more information, see the [read your unread library](#) post.

Week 33: Stretch a task

When you're immersed in a task, see if you can stretch it a little further to get the most out of it. You might like to fold your washing at the line, rinse and put your dishes away instead of leaving them in the sink for later, or run an extra hundred metres. Taking what you're doing a bit further makes good use of any setting up you've done, and is a simple way to boost efficiency.

For more information, see the [task stretching](#) post, or MaryAnne Bennie's book, *From stuffed to sorted: Your essential guide to organising, room by room* (Wiley, 2011).

Week 34: Wear your unworn wardrobe

Sort through your wardrobe and separate anything you haven't worn for a long time. Think about how you might wear each piece, and challenge yourself to wear them all this week.

This will help you decide whether they deserve to remain in your wardrobe, or whether it's time to move them on.

For more information, see the [wear your unworn wardrobe](#) post.

Week 35: Apply the benchmark principle

The benchmark principle is a tool to help make declutter decisions. It's the best example in its category—your favourite dress or pair of trousers, nicest pen, or most-loved book—that you can compare against. Benchmarking provides perspective and helps you decide whether other items in the group—when held up to the benchmark—meet the standard or fall short. You can then decide more easily what to keep and what to toss. Read through the linked post then try out the benchmark principle in one area of your home or life this week.

For more information, see the [benchmark principle](#) post.

Week 36: Find a place for everything

There are three simple (but not easy) keys to a tidy and easy-to-manage home or office: (1) minimal possessions; (2) a defined place to put them; and (3) returning them every day. A place for *everything* is the holy grail of organised living. But please don't feel overwhelmed as most of the fun is in the journey anyway. Enjoy finding homes for things. If you have kids, teach them to 'house' their new possessions as well—it's intuitive for children to care for and find a place for something when it's new and exciting.

For more information, see the [place for everything](#) post.

Week 37: Download your mind

Our minds almost constantly absorb information. Given the volume and pace of today's information-heavy world, we can end up feeling scattered, shallow, and overwhelmed. Counteract the *upload* with a regular *download* to give your brain time to sift and sort all the material it's taken in. Some good ways to do this are exercise, meditation, sipping a cup of tea, pottering, or writing out what's in your head. Another helpful method is to become aware of your thinking and let your thoughts flow rather than holding onto or ruminating about them. Try doing this on a regular basis—before you hit overwhelm—to feel calmer and more alert.

For more information, see the [download your mind](#) post, or Dr Ginni Mansberg's book, *How to get your mojo back* (New Holland Publishers, 2012).

Week 38: Get up earlier

This challenge will make the biggest difference if you are *not* a morning person. Even rising fifteen minutes early—and only occasionally—will give you a head start on your day, or time to do something you enjoy.

For more information, see the [get up earlier](#) challenge.

Week 39: Clear to empty

When we process something fully, we not only enjoy a sense of completion, but also peace and spaciousness in a decision made, a schedule cleared, or room for a new opportunity. Enjoy that starting fresh feeling by clearing something in your life to empty today. You could do all the laundry, empty your filing tray, or make all the phone calls on your list.

For more information, see the [clear to empty](#) challenge.

Week 40: Travel light

Have some fun with packing checklists. In the same way you might dream about and plan for a holiday, think about how you could travel for a few days with only a carry-on bag (or even a shoulder-bag). Write a checklist of what you'd pack, and then plan a short trip to put your list into action!

For more information, see the [two-month all-season packing](#) and the [packing a shoulder-bag](#) posts.

Week 41: Delete one thing

Find a recurring task or habit—maybe the rug you straighten every day, the trousers that don't really need ironing, or the TV show that's gone downhill—and drop it from your regular routine to free up time on an ongoing basis.

For more information, see the [delete one thing](#) challenge.

Week 42: Empty your email inbox

Set up an electronic folder system to action and sort your incoming emails, then clear your inbox to empty. Aim to zero out your inbox every day this week! Get a taste of being in control of your digital life, rather than feeling like it's overwhelming you.

For more information, see the [how to empty your email inbox](#) post.

Week 43: Organise items to be returned

Set aside a container or shelf for all those bits and pieces that have to go back to the store, the library, or to family and friends. Go around your house and find anything that needs to leave your house and clear as much as you can this week.

For more information, see the [items to return](#) post.

Week 44: Make the most of micro-transitions

Use the in between moments between activities to let go of what you've just done, rest, and position yourself for what is coming next. The more practiced you become, the more seamlessly and quickly you will be able to transition, and the more present you will be in each new role and setting.

For more information, see the [micro-transitions](#) post, or Dr Adam Fraser's book, *The Third Space* (Random House Australia, 2012).

Week 45: Discover your level of enough

Take the Extra Organised *enough* challenge: find something in your life you have in abundance, whether it's books, kitchen appliances, or jeans. When you consciously recognise that you have enough of something, you can appreciate it, stop adding to it if necessary, and share any overabundance.

For more information, see the [enough](#) challenge.

Week 46: Recycle happiness

Be creative with something you already have to refresh and extend the initial pleasure you got from it. Wear your clothes in new combinations, browse holiday photos, or find a new recipe for your slow cooker or bread maker.

For more information, see the [how thrift adds to happiness](#) post.

Week 47: Make an anticipation shelf

Stretch your enjoyment of new possessions—or old ones you want to rediscover—by displaying them beautifully on an anticipation shelf (or in a basket) so you can look forward to indulging in them. Books, magazines, movies, music, and tickets are all ideal candidates.

For more information, see the [anticipation shelf](#) post.

Week 48: Choose what you want

No matter what we want and how much we want it, there will be times we struggle to do what is meaningful to us. Busyness and a distracted mind disengage us from precious relationships, procrastination and fatigue make it difficult to establish good habits, and our comfort zone holds us back from trying new things. The good news is that we can choose to live the life we want in any moment. Use the natural transition points in your day to choose for yourself—again and again—exactly what you want and how you want to be.

For more information, see the [choose what you want](#) post.

Week 49: Avoid a source of drama

Save time and sanity this week by avoiding or removing something that could bring drama into your life, whether it's arriving early rather than late, avoiding a gossipy conversation, or filling your car with fuel before it's too late.

For more information, see the [avoid drama](#) challenge.

Week 50: Refine your standards

Find a simpler, quicker way to get a job done this week without compromising on the end result. Perhaps you could take a shortcut, do a task less often, or set yourself a time limit.

For more information, see the [refine your standards](#) post.

Week 51: Declutter upfront

Be conscious of all the ways stuff is entering your home and your life this week. Channel it through a limited number of containers, such as an in tray, email inbox, feed reader, and a box for new possessions. Practice making decisions on every item so each one consciously—not automatically—becomes part of your life.

For more information, see the [upfront decluttering](#) challenge.

Week 52: Find contentment

This week, notice what makes *you* feel content. It's often the little things that offer the most powerful sources of calm and peace. Watching a sunrise or sunset, exercising, pottering, cuddling, breathing deeply, being outdoors, and generosity are good sources, but be open to finding what works for you. Once you find it, make it a part of every day.

For more information, see the [contentment, daily](#) post.