The Clean Desk: 7 ways to get your desk clean and keep it that way

The feeling a clean desk gives you is energizing and sometimes inspiring. The desk is clean, you are focused and work is going to get done! This usually lasts a day or two and a few big projects later the clean desk returns to its original chaotic state. Some people are blessed with large work surfaces – looming desks that command attention upon entering an office. Others reading this article can only wish to have such spacious surroundings while working. Regardless of the amount of desk surface space you have, here are some guidelines to help keep that desk clean.

1. **Think of your desk as prime real estate.** Whatever sits on it needs to deserve to take up the space. Only items you use on a daily basis should sit here.
2. **Keep supplies close by.** Drawers and pencil caddies are convenient ways to make sure often-used items are handy.
3. **Keep things in reach.** Resources, files and other items you use on a daily basis should be within arms reach. If you keep a telephone book on your desk, but use an online directory, then the phone book needs to go.
4. **Think "up"** By putting your computer monitor on a stand, you'll not only raise it to a proper ergonomic level, but you'll give yourself more clean desk surface space. If possible, install shelves above your desk, providing an area where you can keep binders and other resources within arms reach.
5. **Create a system.** Organize your current projects by placing them in project jackets, poly file folders or other manila folders. Take the time to label each file and store them upright in an incline sorter. This is a great way to avoid piles of files and allows you to visually see all of your projects. Now you have a system that will help you maintain your clean desk.
6. **Use a stacked In/Out tray.** Papers and unopened mail coming into your office need a temporary home until you can make decisions regarding them. Make sure that the bottom of the two trays acts as your In-Box, thus limiting just how much stuff can accumulate before you give it some attention. This helps you keep a clean desk and stay on top of projects that need attention.
7. **Get rid of distractions.** Between people stopping by your office, your phone ringing, email coming in at a steady pace and keeping up with appointments and meetings, it's no wonder it's such a feat to maintain a clean desk. To simplify, get rid of excess personal items, including things that need to return to home. You should also pay close attention to the space under your desk as it's often an easy hiding place for clutter. These distractions will only keep you from your goal of obtaining a clean desk.

These simple but useful ideas can help you keep that clean desk year round. Now you will have more time and energy to devote to more important tasks.

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