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ORGANIZE YOUR KITCHEN AND BATH

The kitchen is the hub of most homes. It's where people congregate to eat, do projects, share experiences, and relax. Because we spend so much time there, it's important that the kitchen is organized and functional. Likewise, the often-neglected bathroom needs upkeep to make mornings flow smoothly, from shower to shave. Follow these tips to keep the most-used rooms in the home in tip-top shape.

Determine what purpose your kitchen serves. Do you use it for activities other than food preparation, such as completing homework or paying bills? Set up a specific area in the kitchen for those tasks and gather supplies. For example, to set up a bill-paying center, you'll need: checkbook, envelopes, stamps, return address labels, pens, and a place to store bills to be paid.

Clear the clutter! Get rid of the gadgets, small appliances, and mismatched containers you never use. For remaining items, store those frequently used (more than once a week) on the countertop or easy-to-reach upper cupboards. Store seldom-used items (once a month or less) in the lower (harder to reach) cupboards.

Make the most of every inch. Install hooks under cabinets for mugs, pans, and small colanders. Mount can openers, paper-towel holders, and radios there, too. Place a cutting board over one side of the sink. Utilize space inside cabinet doors to hang a corkboard to post phone numbers and to-do lists.

Avoid confusion and foster accountability in the bathroom. Assign each person a color for toothbrushes and towels. Give each person a drawer or plastic storage bin for his/her personal items. Utilize the space under the sink by using stackable storage containers. Toss expired medicines and cosmetics, tattered towels, and duplicate hair styling appliances. Maintain order by scheduling time to organize on a regular basis.

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