

# Quick Tips for Paper Clutter: Attack the Stack

Ask yourself: Is this useful? Is the information current? How hard would it be to get this information again later? Is this piece of paper helping me achieve my goals?

**Active:** Active papers are items that need your attention or that you use frequently. You'll want to keep them where you can get to them easily. They may include current bills and current receipts. You can usually dispose of these after 30-60 days unless they are needed for tax purposes or some other documentation.

**Keepers:** These are papers you want to keep but they typically don't need to be accessed as frequently as "active" papers. Organize some type of file storage for tax documents, medical records, warranties, etc.

**VIP's – Very Important Papers:** These papers usually need secure storage such as a safe deposit box or fire proof safe. They include social security cards, birth certificates, passports, power of attorney, property titles, etc.

**Discards:** One of your most important strategies in the battle against paper clutter is to regularly discard:

- Junk mail
- School papers
- Magazines
- Catalogs
- Old receipts – You typically only need to keep receipts for about 30 to 90 days. Keep receipts long enough to verify that the expense is correct on your bank statement or credit card statement. After that, you only need to keep receipts for very expensive purchases or for items that you plan to deduct on your taxes.
- Old cancelled checks and bank statements (unless needed for tax purposes or proof of purchase).
- Statements from credit cards and utilities can usually be discarded after you've checked to make sure that all charges are correct and paid the current bill.

Shred or otherwise destroy any statements, documents or records which contain personal or financial information after they are no longer needed.