The information from this workshop is taken from the book *How to Get Organized in Spite of Yourself* by Sunny Schlenger.

Schlenger has done a lot of research over the years about the connection between personality and organizational style.

Here is what Schlenger has observed:

Some people like to have everything put away neatly:

![File cabinet](image1)

While others like to have everything where they can see it:
Still others like something in between, perhaps a neat pile of papers:

All of these organizational methods are good; they just have to fit your personality!

If you try to get organized in a way that is contrary to your personality, you will have difficulty staying organized because it is unnatural to you! So, don’t feel bad if you have given up on being organized. This workshop will help you succeed!

Before we look at different organizational styles, answer the following questions (*Adapted from How to Be Organized in Spite of Yourself*)

1. When I go through my “to do” pile, I:
   A. Lay everything out so I can see it.
   B. Sort and put everything away (or out of sight)
   C. Divide the pile into smaller sub-piles.
   D.

2. When I have an important phone call to make or return I:
   A. Write a reminder and keep it plain sight at all times.
   B. Write a reminder in a notebook.
   C. Make sure the reminder (in whatever form) is neat and pleasantly viewable
3. When I get catalogs or mailings I:
   A. Leave them out so I remember to look at them.
   B. Put them in a drawer or out of sight so I am not distracted by them.
   C. Put them on a shelf next to other catalogs or magazines of the same size or in the exact center of a space.

4. When I get monthly bills I:
   A. Leave them in sight so I remember them.
   B. Put them in a drawer or file them away.
   C. Keep them in neat piles.

Hopefully you’ve noticed a distinct pattern in these questions. You are being asked if you keep everything out where you can see it, put it all away, keep things in piles, or randomly put things anywhere. Schlenger labels these organizational styles as:

**Everything Out**

**Nothing Out**

**Right Angler**

Based on the quiz above, which one do you think best describes you?

Take these quizzes to confirm your answer:

**Everything Out**
Answer the following questions to see if this organizational style describes you, using the following response options:
Never = 0 points
Occasionally = 1 point
Frequently = 2 points
1. Do you prefer having things out where you can see them? _____
2. Do you write notes on any paper that catches your eye? _____
3. Do you feel like it’s a waste of time to put things away if you’re going to use them again in the near future? _____
4. Do you believe that out of sight is out of mind? _____
5. Do you like to surround yourself with pictures, drawings, cartoons, etc.? _____
6. When you do a project, do you spread everything you need out and leave it there until the project is finished?
7. Do you forget about things you put away?
8. Do you think piles are evidence that you are working hard?
9. When filing papers away, do you worry that you’ll never see them again?
10. Do you like things to stare you in the face as a reminder of what you need to do?
Count your points!
0-6: Not really “Everything Out”
7-13: Strong “Everything Out” tendencies
14-20: Full-fledged “Everything Out”

How do “Everything Out” people get organized?

-Use bins or trays that are labeled, so any papers you accumulate can be sorted immediately. For example, you can have a bin or space on your desk labeled:

“Homework Due Immediately”

“Material to Study for Exams”

“Graded Assignments”

You can also color-code your papers and assignments according to importance, relevance, due dates, etc.
-Use bulletin boards/message boards
Schlenger (1999) suggests using one board for messages and reminders and a different board for pictures, drawings, or other artwork. Your messages and reminders will get lost if they are mixed with pictures and other artwork.

-Use clear containers. For example, you can use clear bags, clear notebook dividers, clear folders for storing supplies and papers. They are still organized, but you can still see them.

-Examine what is on top of your desk or workspace. Do you really need to have each item on your desk or workspace? Prioritize and re-examine your desk on a regular basis.

**Nothing Out**
Answer the following questions to see if this organizational style describes you, using the following response options:
Never = 0 points
Occasionally = 1 point
Frequently = 2 point

1. Do you hate to see clutter? ______
2. Does having a clear desk/space make you feel like you have control? ______
3. Do you equate a clear space with a clear mind? ______
4. Do you put everything away/out of sight before people come over? ______
5. Do you prefer to have only what you need at that moment on your desk? ______
6. Do you have containers and folders to keep things out of sight? ______
7. Do you like writing things down in a notebook? ______
8. Do you like to put things away after using them? ______
9. Does putting things away make you feel like you’ve accomplished something? ______
10. Do you hide things and then forget about them? ______

Count your points!
0-6: Not really “Nothing Out”
7-13: Strong “Nothing Out” tendencies
14-20: Full-fledged “Nothing Out”

How can “Nothing Outs” get organized?

Since this type of organizational style requires putting things out of sight, filing is an effective method of getting organized.

To accomplish this, any type of paper that you handle on a regular basis should have its own, accessible space.

For example, create a file or folder for each course that you are taking. Label each folder with the course name (or however you refer to that course) so that you can read it from the opposite side of the room. Example:

MATH
These folders should all be kept in the same place, such as your book bag or desk drawer. This way, they are out of sight, but always know exactly where they are.

When you are done using a particular folder, make you sure you PUT IT BACK where it belongs. Make an effort to make sure everything is back in your bag/drawer before you go to bed each night.

Using a day planner or appointment book is also beneficial. This way, you can write everything down, but it is out of sight.
Right Angler

Answer the following questions to see if this organizational style describes you, using the following response options:

Never = 0 points
Occasionally = 1 point
Frequently = 2 points

1. Do you feel like you’re getting organized when you straighten up your space? ______
2. Do you like neat piles? ______
3. Would you rather straighten than clean? ______
4. Does clutter not bother you as long as it is neat? ______
5. Do you like arranging things in a certain way on shelves? ______
6. When you feel stress, does it make you feel better to straighten something up? ______
7. When you see an item that is out of place, do you feel the need to put it back? ______
8. Does it annoy when pictures are crooked? ______
9. Does having to change your systems/routines bother you? ______
10. If something is very messy, do you have to avoid it until you can clean it up? ______

Count your points!

0-6: Not really “Nothing Out”
7-13: Strong “Nothing Out” tendencies
14-20: Full-fledged “Nothing Out”

How do “Right Anglers” get organized?

- Arrange your papers and class materials in a way that makes you feel comfortable. Don’t worry if other people don’t understand your method.

- Make sure you can find any paper you need in 3 minutes or less. If you can’t do accomplish this, your system needs to change.
- Use storage containers that look neat and are also functional. 
  **Example**: Use a 3 ring binder with tabs instead of a folder, so the papers look neat and are easy to find.

- Don’t try to get completely organized at one time. Divide the task into parts so that is easier to accomplish.

These are some of the most common organizational styles. Everyone is different and prefers different methods of organization. The most important thing is that you **get organized**.

**When you are organized, you will feel better, and you will have more time for other things.**

**One more thing….**

Let’s review…. 

**Name the 3 organizational styles that are mentioned in this workshop:**

1. 

2. 

3. 

**Which of these organizational styles best describes you?**

**What does your organizational style mean?**
How can you get organized based on your organizational style?

Why is it important to be organized?

Take what you learned from this workshop and try implementing an organizational system for 1 week. If it doesn’t work for you, try something new. Getting organized takes time, but putting in the time now will SAVE you time later!

For more information about organizational styles, refer to the book on which this workshop was based:

*How to be Organized in Spite of Yourself* by Sunny Schlenger
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