

How to Become a Professional Organizer

by Chaos to Clarity Organizing and Design

Table of Contents

[So you want to be a professional organizer...](#)

[Business Focus](#)

[Steps to becoming an organizer](#)

[Financial Investment](#)

[Training and Resources](#)

[Appendix A: Types of Organizing](#)

[Appendix B: Resources](#)

[Appendix C: Suggested Supplies](#)

So you want to be a professional organizer...

Congratulations on finding something you love that benefits other people and which makes you money. This resource is designed to give you a lot of resources and information that you can then go and explore and decide for yourself just how you will become an organizer.

But here are some things you should know at the start of your path:

- Most organizers have their own business.
 - It doesn't take much to start a business- just registering with the state, basically.
- There is no official or central accreditation or training.
 - Apart from NAPO and becoming a Certified Professional Organizer (CPO)
- You are the business, and the business is you.
 - How you grow is equivalent to how your business grows. The more education you can get, the more successful your business will be.

Business Focus

What's your goal for being an organizer? Is it to physically do the organizing, teaching people skills so they can do it themselves, relieve emotional stress, be your own boss, have a side job that fits with your life or your family's life, create a business that runs and brings you money without you being present? The clearer you are with your reason, the quicker you will get to the style that fits you.

Decide if you want to be the organizer or if you want to build up a business that has multiple organizers, and you're the manager.

Decide if you want to have a business partner.

There's a lot of different avenues to choose from (see [Appendix A](#)), and perhaps the best way to get started is by working with some other organizers and getting exposure to different methods and different ways of doing things.

Steps to becoming an organizer

These are some basic steps, and they're generally in sequential order, but things might happen at different timing, or some of these steps might not apply to you.

1. Decide what being an organizer looks like for you

- a. How many hours per week? Working alone or with other organizers? Which geographic locations? Which specialties? (see [Appendix A](#))
2. Decide your company name.
3. Decide your business [entity type](#).
 - a. Most organizers are either sole proprietors or LLCs.
4. Get an EIN (employer identification number) from the [IRS](#).
5. Register with the state.
6. Get liability insurance.
 - a. Make sure you are covered for items that you handle or transport.
7. Open a business checking account (and possibly apply for a credit card).
8. Decide which bookkeeping software you will use.
 - a. There are many free ones, such as Wave, or you could pay for a reliable one like Quickbooks.
9. Get trained (see [Training and Resources](#)).
10. Create a client agreement.
 - a. Include expectations, payment terms and methods, cancellation policy, info about insurance, signature line, and media release to take photos for marketing purposes.
11. Decide how you want to get paid and which platforms/methods you accept.
 - a. Keep in mind that Venmo is not encouraged because if you only use the free version, you would be a business acting as a personal account, and that is not ethical.
12. Network and market.
13. Provide people with contact info.
 - a. This could be as simple as a business card, Facebook page, or one-page website.
14. Gather supplies.
 - a. See [Appendix C](#)
15. Keep track of client information.
 - a. Start with Excel for now, then you can graduate to something fancier later.
16. For more steps and details, see [Organize 365's master list](#).

Financial Investment

Being an organizer has low overhead: you work out of your home, go to other people's homes, and utilize inexpensive supplies to sort their possessions. To get started, you don't need much. There are some regular subscriptions to keep in mind, such as registering with the state, website hosting, and insurance, but most other things don't cost much.

When it comes to organizing solutions such as containers, hooks, and furniture, you will have to decide whether you want to pay for (and possibly return) those items, or if you want the client to.

If you buy them, you will need to make sure there is either enough money in your business checking account or use a credit card and bill the client at the end of the project.

You'll also have to decide how you want to get trained and educated within the industry, and in what form you would like to continue your education as you become more experienced in your business.

Training and Resources

Local (Salt Lake City)

Utah Professional Organizers

If you're looking to test the waters and see if you'd be a good fit for organizing as a profession, come to one of our meetings, made up of about 30 organizers. Monthly presentations have included industry topics such as marketing, ethical concerns, and business development, with room for social activities and networking. We're currently meeting virtually on Zoom every second Friday of the month from 10:30am-12:45pm.

Website: utahprofessionalorganizers.com

Facebook page: facebook.com/UtahProfessionalOrganizers

The Whole Package Organizing

Mary and Sarah teamed up to create a business that specializes in doing all rooms of the house. To do this, they have a substantial workforce of organizers. Some have their own business, and some just work for them. To be a part of their work pool, you must first be trained (level 1), which is multi-week long and costs around \$1,000.

Owners: Mary Wood and Sarah Hansen

Website: thewholepackageorganizing.com

Phone: (385) 215-8295

Email: contact@thewholepackageorganizing.com

Online

[NAPO](#)

The gold standard for professional organizers, the National Association of Productivity and Organizing Professionals has a wealth of information on one website. They were the first when the industry was just starting to be formed in the 1980s. They have annual conferences, and have had a host of famous presenters give addresses and workshops. However, all of this comes at a price. First, there's the annual membership fee, which gives you access to many resources and gives you a . Then there's [NAPO University](#), through which you can achieve a certificate in different facets of organizing. So be prepared to make a significant financial investment to access the top educational resources of the business.

[Pro Organizer Studio](#)

Jen Obermeier was an organizer when she realized that she could compile her learned knowledge and offer it to other newbie organizers. So she created a website on which she offers countless information to kickstart an organizing business. There's many things you can get for free, and if you want specialized, one-on-one coaching from her, you can pay for that.

[Clear and Simple](#)

Marla Dee is considered one of the pioneers of professional organizers in the Salt Lake Area, and she created her own program to meet the demand of individuals wanting to be trained in the industry. Her level 1 self-guided training provides you with all the resources needed to start a business, including all the forms and written resources to work confidently with clients.

[Organize 365](#)

Lisa Woodruff has her own business, Organize 365, through which she offers workshops and programs to clients. She has also compiled a really handy checklist for starting your business, along with her podcast for professional organizers.

[IAP Career College](#)

The International Association of Professions Career College has an online professional organizer certificate course that takes an average of six weeks to complete. I have no experience with this college; I only saw a Facebook ad for it in December 2020, so I'm not sure how good it is or reputable. I've never heard of the college, so sign up at your own risk. However, it might be a good introduction to starting a business and thinking like an organizer. At least, it's a relatively small financial investment.

Appendix A: Types of Organizing

Organizing services, specialties and distinctions

Modified from [Find My Organizer's list](#)

Age

- Children
- Teens
- Students
- Families with young children
- Families with older children
- Single adults
- Empty nesters
- Seniors / retired

Area

- Attics
- Basement
- Bathrooms
- Bedrooms
- Children's rooms
- Closets
- Craft rooms
- Garage (cleaning, storage solutions)
- Kitchen
- Laundry room
- Living room
- Office
- Pantry
- Storage units

Focus

- Clutter elimination & coaching
- Commercial organizing
- Decluttering & reorganization
- Digital decluttering and organization
- Downsizing
- Filing & storage systems
- Holiday storage
- Home organization

- Interior design
- Interior decorating
- Move-ins
- Move-outs
- One room or the whole house
- Packing / unpacking
- Paperwork / filing
- Personal shopping
- Recycling
- Relocation
- Residential
- Small spaces
- Total house organizing

Specialty

- ADD/ADHD
- Chronic disorganization expertise
- Combined / blended households
- Coordinating dual residences
- Custom storage and design
- Downsizing
- Estate organizing
- Hoarding (cleanup, coaching)
- Home schooling
- Home staging (for sale, for living)
- KonMari Method
- Memorabilia / archive storage / photos
- Minimalism
- Packing & unpacking services
- The Home Edit
- Time management coaching
- Senior move management
- Space planning
- Paired with a different training you know

External

- Organizing workshops
- Working as a Contained Home organizer for The Container Store
- Partnering with a related industry

Methods

- [KonMari](#)
- [Sunday Basket](#)
- [Kanban](#)
- [Time Timer](#)
- [Pomodoro](#)
- [GTD](#)

Possible modes of delivery

- In-person, working together with the client
- In-person, coaching the client to do it themselves
- In-person, working without the client
- Virtual organizing sessions
- Educational course, in-person
- Educational course, virtual (video series)
- Facebook groups
- Blogs

Things you might be asked to do on the job

Common tasks

- Label containers, shelves, or areas
- Clean surfaces or items
- Vacuum
- Sweep
- Lift heavy items
- Dispose of expired food
- Shred papers
- Recommend a paper retention schedule
- Assign homework
- Follow up about assignments
- Work without client input

Solutions

- Recommend variety of products for specific functions
- Shop for supplies
- Design spaces with Elfa-brand product at The Container Store
- Install specific, brand-name organizing systems, such as Elfa, FastTrack, etc.

Specialized help you could offer

- Interior design
- Space planning
- Custom carpentry (shelves, etc.)
- Haul away the contents of a household
- eWaste disposal (batteries, hard drives, cables, old TVs, etc.)
- Hazardous waste disposal (paint, solvents, cleaners, etc.)
- Furniture assembly/disassembly
- Move furniture
- Picture hanging
- Curtain hanging
- Wash or fold laundry
- Pack house contents
- Pack and/or ship fine art or expensive collectibles

Other situations

- Be around pets
- Be alone in the house with children
- Be in an environment perjurious to your health (dust, feces, pests, pets, unsafe people, etc.)
- Deal with rodent feces that could contain the hantavirus

Appendix B: Resources

Books

Organizing in general

- [*Organizing from the Inside Out*](#) by Julie Morgenstern
- [*It's All Too Much*](#) by Peter Walsh
- [*How to Organize Just About Everything*](#) by Peter Walsh
- [*The Not So Big House: A Blueprint for the Way We Really Live*](#) by Sarah Susanka
- [*The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning*](#) by Margareta Magnusson
- [*Decluttering at the Speed of Life*](#) by Dana K. White
- [*How to Manage Your Home Without Losing Your Mind*](#) by Dana K. White

Organizing brands

- [*The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*](#) by Marie Kondo
- [*Spark Joy. An Illustrated Master Class on the Art of Organizing and Tidying Up*](#) by Marie Kondo
- [*Joy at Work: Organizing Your Professional Life*](#) by Marie Kondo
- [*The Home Edit: A Guide to Organizing and Realizing Your House Goals*](#) by Clea Shearer and Johanna Teplin
- [*The Home Edit Life: The No-Guilt Guide to Owning What You Want and Organizing Everything*](#) by Clea Shearer and Joanna Teplin

Downsizing

- [*Downsizing the Family Home: What to Save, What to Let Go*](#) by Marni Jameson

Minimalism

- [*The Art of Discarding: How to Get Rid of Clutter and Find Joy*](#) by Nagisa Tatsumi
- [*Project 333: The Minimalist Fashion Challenge that Proves Less is Really So Much More*](#) by Courtney Carver
- [*The 100 Thing Challenge: How I Got Rid of Almost Everything, Remade My Life, and Regained My Soul*](#) by Dave Bruno
- [*The More of Less: Finding the Life You Want Under Everything You Own*](#) by Joshua Becker
- [*The Minimalist Home: A Room-by-Room Guide to a Decluttered, Refocused Life*](#) by Joshua Becker
- [*Goodbye, Things: The New Japanese Minimalism*](#) by Fumio Sasaki

Websites

- [NAPO](#)
- [Pro Organizer Studio](#)
- [Organize 365](#)
- [Apartment Therapy](#)
- [The Minimalists](#)
- [Becoming Minimalist](#)

Shows

- [Hot Mess House](#)
- [Get Organized with the Home Edit](#)
- [Tidying Up with Marie Kondo](#)
- [Tiny House Hunters](#)
- [Hoarders](#)
- [How Clean is Your House?](#)
- [Clean Sweep](#)

Movies

- [Minimalism: A Documentary About the Important Things](#)
- [Thrive with Less](#)

Videos

- [Living Big in a Tiny House](#) channel

Magazines

- [Real Simple](#)

Appendix C: Suggested Supplies

Essentials

- Post-its - super sticky
- Sharpies - [fine tip, retractable](#)
- Scissors - [Westcott titanium](#)
- Box cutter/utility knife
- Packing tape and dispenser
- Trash bags - white (donations or storage), black (trash), clear (recycling)
- Measuring tape

Nice to have

- Needle nose pliers
- Office (Scotch) tape
- [Felt bumpers](#)
- Label maker - doesn't have to be fancy: [Walmart](#)
- Water bottle
- Snacks
- Pencil
- Stud finder
- Small vacuum
- Shoe covers or indoor shoes
- Hammer and/or rubber mallet
- Ziploc bags of different sizes (including [2-gallon](#))
- Band-aids and Neosporin
- Single-use gloves
- [Rubber grip cloth gloves](#)
- Extra razor blades for utility knife
- Drill
- Room-specific [moving box labels](#)

What to transport your supplies in

- Cleaning caddy
- Cloth tool bag
- Shower caddy
- Apron (server's style) on your person