



ABBY LAWSON

FROM: JUST A GIRL AND HER BLOG ORGANIZE YOUR CREATIVE SPACE

I'm delighted to welcome back Abby from [Just a Girl and Her Blog](#) who is going to share with us ideas on how to organize our bonus spaces in our home.

ABBY: Hi there, I am so glad that you're here and I'm so grateful to Laura for getting us all together for Get Organized HQ so we can all nerd out on all things organizing together.

MEET ABBY LAWSON

I'm especially excited to talk about creative spaces today. I have a special place in my heart for spaces like home offices, craft rooms, mom caves, she-sheds and all sorts of creative spaces, so I'm thrilled to be talking about the best ways to organize them with you today.

If we haven't met yet, my name is Abby Lawson and I blog over at [justagirlandherblog.com](#), where I talk a lot about organizing and home decor and teach a little bit about blogging, as well. I really love all things home, but organizing is my very favorite so I have a YouTube channel and Instagram account called Abby Organizes. You may have seen me under that branding as well.

I live in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania with my husband Donnie and our two boys, Connor and Caleb, who are 11 and nine right now. And as the only girl in my household, it has felt especially important to me to have a girly, creative spot where I can do all of the crafting and creating

and planning and projecting that I want.

I love my family to pieces, but I also like to sneak away to my own little spot sometimes and a creative space like a home office or craft room is perfect for that. And it's even better when it's organized.

A LOOK AT ABBY'S CREATIVE SPACES

My creative spaces have looked many different ways over the years. We lived in a small townhouse for seven years, and when my boys were really little and needed their own rooms, there really wasn't a great spot for me to have a craft room. So I took over this tiny little nook in our basement.



It was really only big enough to have a desk and a little drawer unit with a few supplies, but this spot was all mine and I was grateful to have even a little place to work on creative projects.

When my boys got a little older, we moved them into the same room in the townhouse and I was able to take over the smallest bedroom as my office and craft space.



This room was one of my first big blog projects and it was so fun to create a pretty and organized space that was really me.

Then a few years ago, we were able to build a house and one of the reasons we chose our specific floor plan was this big bonus room over the garage that is now my current office and craft room.



It took a few years to get it organized just the way I wanted it and now that it's done, it is my favorite room in the house.

So I've organized creative spaces of all shapes and sizes and each one has had its unique challenges, no matter how big or small it has been. But for any of the creative spaces I've organized, I've gone through the same step-by-step process to make the most of the space that I have so that it is both really, really functional and also matches my taste and style so that it's a spot that I love to spend time in.



So today, I want to walk you through the step-by-step process I use when I organize my creative spaces and I hope that it will be helpful for you as well.

Okay, so first things first. Most of us who are creatives probably have at least some scatter-brain tendencies because our brains are always thinking of ideas and jumping from thing to thing, but because of this it's really easy for our offices and craft rooms to get busy and cluttered and full of stuff, which makes them feel really overwhelming to organize.

REMOVE THE TRASH

So sometimes we just need an easy starting point. One of the ways I like to start these overwhelming organizing projects is by simply removing the trash. Getting rid of things that are broken or no longer usable is typically an easy decision to make because we're not emotionally invested in those things. They're no-brainer type decisions and once we've cleared the trash out of the way, we have more space to work and sort through the items that are left.

I'm not asking you to make any tough decisions at this point if there are things that you're not sure if you want to keep or toss. Just simply start on one side of the room and go through every drawer, cabinet and surface and throw away or recycle the items that you are 100% positive need to go.

PUT LIKE ITEMS TOGETHER

Once the trash is out of the way, it's time to start sorting. If we're going to organize our creative space, we need to figure out exactly what we're working with so we know what types of storage pieces we need, which items should be arranged together, what layout makes the most sense for our space, et cetera.

So our goal is to go through the items in the room and place all like items together. For example, in this photo you can see that all of the

pillows are together, all of the candles are together, all of my little picture frames are together, the folded textiles are all together, et cetera.

LIKE ITEMS TOGETHER



This part of the process might take a good bit of time to complete, but the good news is that the more thorough we are with this step of the process, the easier the rest of the project will be.

Now ideally it would be great if we could just use the floor and surfaces in our creative space to sort out our items, but if the room is too cluttered or your creative space is in a shared room like a bedroom, you might need to find another staging area close by to sort your stuff. This could be a guest room or the dining room table or a corner of your bedroom. Any spare piece of floor or surface that is close by will work.

This may mean that the items from your creative space are in the way for a little bit, which can be annoying, but I almost like that they're annoying and in the way because that is even more motivation to keep going and finish our project.

So if you're sorting items in a different area than your creative space, I would grab a laundry basket or other large tote, fill it with items, then take it to your staging area to sort them and then repeat until you have all of your items sorted.

Again, whether you're sorting in your creative space or in another spot close by, your goal is to put all of the like items together so you can see exactly what you're dealing with.

DECLUTTER LIKE CRAZY

So step three is to declutter like crazy. We want to be as brutal as possible here. Here are a few things you want to be looking for during this step.

WHAT CAN I RELOCATE?

First, what can I relocate? Are there items in this room that it makes more sense to store in a different space?

So for example, if I was organizing my craft room and I came across some Christmas decorations, those would be better in my Christmas bins that I keep in the basement, so I can relocate them and free up some space in my craft room.

WHAT CAN I DONATE OR SELL?

Along with relocating, we can also ask, "What can I donate or sell?" If there are items in your creative space that are still in good condition, but you don't have any use for them anymore, can you donate them to a thrift store or a church or camp or shelter that could use them?

I know that with craft supplies especially it is tempting to hang on to every single item in case we just so happen to have the perfect project for it someday, but if we've had something for a few years and haven't used it yet, chances are we aren't going to.

Your extra supplies could be a real blessing to someone if you're willing to donate them to a worthy cause. I typically tend to donate items rather than sell them because it's quicker, but if I had a bigger ticket item like a cutting machine for example, like a Cricut or Silhouette that I wanted to get rid of, I might take the time to sell it on Facebook Marketplace or Craigslist instead if I could get a good amount of money for it.

Otherwise, if they're just small ticket items that would be a couple dollars here and there, I just donate them because it's not worth the time that it takes to take pictures and list them and

meet up with people and all those things.

WHAT CAN I THROW AWAY OR RECYCLE?

So the third thing we're going to ask during our decluttering phase is, "What can I throw away or send to the recycling bin?" I know we got rid of trash at the beginning, but as you declutter, you will inevitably find more items that can be tossed. Think dried up markers and glue sticks or broken craft supplies or pieces of scrapbook paper that are too small to be used in a constructive way. All of those things can be thrown away or recycled.



So we're really trying to get rid of as much stuff as we can because the less stuff we have, the less cluttered our space will be and the easier it will be to keep it organized.

MAKING YOUR PLAN

Once we've decluttered as much as we possibly can, it's time to move on to step four, which is making our plan for organizing our creative space.

Okay, now this is where it gets a little trickier because there is no one-size-fits-all solution here. Everyone will have different items they need to store, a different size and shape of space that they're working with and different storage solutions at their disposal, but here is how I usually tackle this planning process in my creative spaces.

MAKE A LIST

So first, I make a list of all the different types of items I need to store in my space. This should

be really easy because we already have all of our stuff separated with like items together, so my list would look something like this.

MAKE A LIST.

- Pens
- Fabric
- Wrapping paper
- Wreaths
- Extra printer ink
- Paint
- Party supplies
- Yoga mats
- Photo Equipment
- Greenery

Once I have all of my categories of items written down, I want to go through and give myself an idea of what types of storage pieces would be best for each category.

This isn't set in stone, so don't worry. You're allowed to change your mind later. I'm just saying that based on the items we have and the amount of space we know they'll take up, we want to think about what storage solutions will make the most sense for them.

This is a good time to pop over to Pinterest and get ideas and see how others have organized different categories of items in their creative spaces to get your organizing juices flowing. There are so many brilliant ideas out there.

STORAGE SOLUTION IDEAS

If you're not sure where to start with storing your items, here are a few of the solutions that have worked best for me and my creative spaces. So first, I love the combination of open shelving plus storage bins.

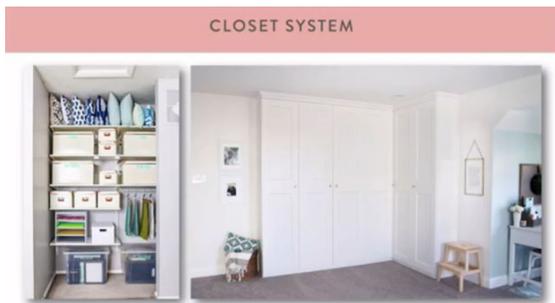


Open shelving like a bookcase or a cube unit

or other storage unit makes supplies easily accessible and they can also double as decor too, which is kind of fun. But then adding opaque or natural fiber bins also helps to corral your different categories of items and they could also hide unsightly supplies from view, so it's a win-win.

MAXIMIZE CLOSET STORAGE

Another thing that I have found to be helpful when organizing my creative spaces is to maximize my closet storage if I happen to have a closet in the room.



Most closets just come with the standard single bar and one shelf, so it's easy to create more storage by installing additional shelves and rails. We did this in my closet in my townhouse craft room, which you can see in the left photo here and it worked really well.

In this closet, I used the IKEA ALGOT system, which they are actually phasing out and replacing right now, but the Elfa system from the Container Store would also work really well, and places like Home Depot and Lowes also carry ClosetMaid and other closet systems that can help to maximize your space within a closet.

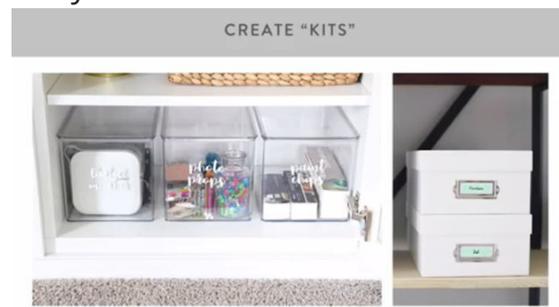
My office and craft room in our current house didn't have a closet when we moved in, so we added closet-like storage with the IKEA pack system, which you can see here in the picture on the right.

Closet systems can be a bit of an investment, but they are a total game changer when it comes to adding storage. So if you need more places to store your stuff, consider maximizing the closet

space you already have by adding a closet system or putting in some sort of closet-like structure if you don't have one currently.

CREATING LITTLE KITS

For smaller groupings of items in my creative space, I end up creating little kits, simply corraling the items together in a bin or box. This helps to keep like items together and makes them easy to find.



In these photos, I use acrylic bins and cardboard photo boxes, but you could easily do something similar with shoe boxes or envelope boxes or diaper boxes.

If your up-cycling a box, you can make it look pretty by painting it or covering it in wrapping paper. And I'm just storing things. Smaller items like my label maker and supplies, photo props that I use anytime. I take pictures of printables. You can see my paint chips there.

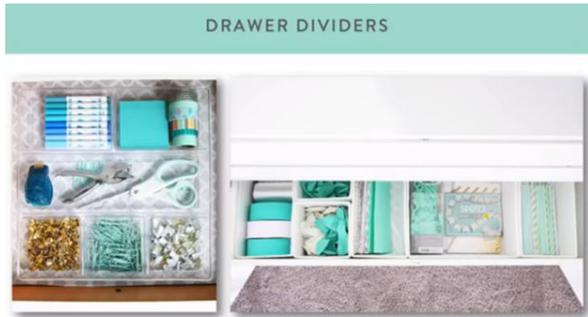
And then the boxes in the right photo, I'm storing different types of envelopes and then the different types of ink for my printer. So these little kits really help us to stay organized and keep our like items together.

DRAWER DIVIDERS

If you have a desk or are using a dresser or any type of drawer unit in your space, drawer dividers are so key.

Without dividers, drawers usually get messy the first time you open and shut them, but giving each item its own spot really helps to maintain order.

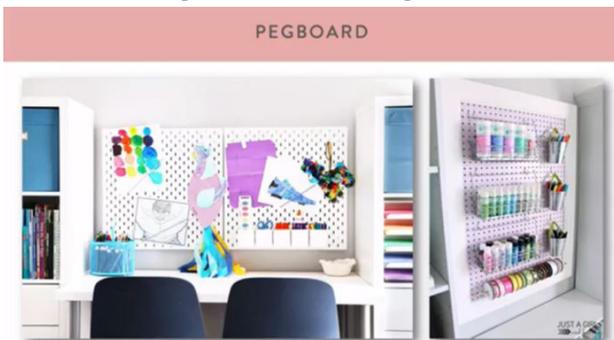
So for shallow desk drawers holding very small items, I like acrylic organizers, which you can find at Target or on Amazon or the Container Store.



And then for drawers that are a little deeper and are holding larger items, I love IKEA's SKUBB boxes. That's S-K-U-B-B, SKUBB boxes, which are shown in the photo on the right here. They come in three different sizes and they really create great division within a drawer.

PEGBOARDS

One final solution I find myself reaching for more and more in creative spaces are pegboards. Again, they make a pretty display piece, as well as being a smart storage solution.



So the white pegboards on the left in this photo are from IKEA and they have a bunch of different attachments that you can get to hold your items.

The pegboard on the right was actually a freebie I got. It was originally really ugly, so I painted it and had Donnie help me frame it in and it held tons of craft supplies in my townhouse office.

So these options are certainly aren't the only storage solutions that work for creative spaces,

but they are some of the ones that I find myself using or recommending over and over again.

USE WHAT YOU OWN FIRST

Now, since our wheels are turning and we're thinking about storage solutions, I want to make sure I say loud and clear definitely try to use what you already own first.

Organizing a space does not mean that you have to run out and buy all sorts of new bins and furniture pieces. Many times we already have items in our homes that we can use to store our supplies. We just need a little creativity to help make them the best storage solution for our space.

So we definitely want to use bins, baskets and storage pieces we already have as much as possible.

USE WHAT YOU OWN FIRST.



In the photo on the left of my townhouse office, a desk with some built-in storage would probably have been helpful, but I already owned that desk and it was in good condition so I stuck with it, and then I just added storage with a little three-drawer unit under the desk, which I also already owned so I didn't have to spend any money there.

In the photo in the middle, like I mentioned previously, the pegboard was an upcycled piece that I got for free and it ended up being a fantastic storage solution.

And before I had any storage pieces in my current office, I repurposed an old dresser to help store gift wraps, supplies and crafting items.

And lots of times just with a little creativity, items we already own can be a great storage solution.

SKETCHING OUT YOUR PLAN

All right, so now let's talk about making our actual plan. I like to sketch mine out just so I can have a visual representation of what it's going to look like.

I will often just do this with paper and pencil, but if you prefer a digital representation, sites like [floorplanner.com](https://www.floorplanner.com) let you put in your room's dimensions and try out different layouts that way.

I have also used IKEA's planning tools a lot of times. Even if I'm not planning on using their products, their tools can help me get a clear idea of my space.



If you look in this image here, both of the graphics that have the cabinets on them were made with IKEA's space planning tools.

WISH LIST

So once I have a good idea of what all I need to store and the best way to store those items and I have sketched out my plan using as many items as possible that I already own, sometimes there are still gaps in my storage and I need a few more pieces.

So for example, when we sold our townhouse, part of the terms of the sale was to leave most of my office storage pieces behind for the new owner, so I had almost no office storage items when we moved to our current house.

So I made my plan. I came up with a wish list of items that I wanted to use in my creative space.

Our whole house was basically a plain, white box at that point, so there were a bunch of other rooms I needed to spend my time, energy and money in before I was able to work on my office.

But having that wish list in mind helped me to know what I was looking for and gave me a goal for when we had saved up money and had time to devote to my office project, which ended up being a few years after we moved in.

Even if we had been ready to work on the office right away, I'm still glad that I had the time to live with and use the office as is because it helps to give me a better idea of what I really needed. Not only saved me a bunch of money, but it turned out to be better storage solutions as well and we got there eventually.

TEMPORARY STORAGE SOLUTIONS

Now, if you end up having a waiting period like I did before you started putting all of the items from your wish list in place, does that mean that you have to wait all that time to get organized? No, definitely not.

Sometimes we need to put some temporary storage solutions in place, and while they may not be quote-unquote Pinterest perfect, they get the job done and keep our items organized so that we can use our space efficiently.



As I mentioned, my current office looked like this for a few years before I was able to complete my wish list that I had made. It wasn't

100% ideal, but I could find what I needed and my creative space stayed mostly tidy throughout that time.

So don't feel like you have to wait for perfection in order to be organized. Set up some temporary solutions until you can slowly over time work through that wish list and get your creative space looking the way you want it.

EXECUTE THE PLAN

So whether you're using temporary solutions at first or have all the storage pieces you need and are ready to go, once you have your items divided by category and have gotten rid of all the unnecessary clutter and have put a solid plan in place for how you're going to use your space, it's time to execute the plan.

You'll want to keep your groupings of like items together as you put things away. And here are a few general rules of thumb to follow as you're deciding exactly where to store things.

WHAT DO I NEED TO ACCESS MOST EASILY?

First, "What do I need to be able to access most easily?" The items that you use often should be front and center within easy arm's reach so that you can just grab them and go.

"What do I only need to be able to access occasionally?" Sometimes, there are things in my craft room that I only use or twice a year. I don't need to get to them every day, so these items should go up higher or in the back sections of closets and cabinets since they are not used as frequently.

ARE THERE ITEMS THAT ONLY FIT IN ONE SPACE?

We also want to ask, "Are there are large or awkwardly shaped items that will only fit in one specific space?" So sometimes an item has to go in a certain spot simply because that's the only place where it will fit.

In my current office, I had things like wrapping paper rolls and my photography equipment and wreaths that are big and bulky and there was only one spot that they would fit. So I put those in place first and then all of the smaller items had to work around them.

ARE THERE ITEMS CHILDREN NEED TO ACCESS?

"Are there any items that small children need to be able to access by themselves?" Do you keep your kid's art supplies in your creative space? If so, their items should go down lower if you want them to be able to grab them by themselves.

And then on the other hand, "Are there any items that small children should not be able to access?" And obviously, those items should go up higher.

WHICH ITEMS SHOULD BE CLOSE TO WHERE ACTIVITY TAKES PLACE?

And finally, "Which items should be close to where their activity takes place?" For example, if you always do scrapbooking at the same table, it would be ideal to have all of your scrapbooking supplies close to that spot so that you don't have to lug them far every time you want to use them.

So those are just some questions to consider when you're deciding exactly where everything should go.

LABEL YOUR ITEMS

Step six is to label your items. This step is optional and totally based on personal preference. Some people like tons of labels. Some people think they make the space too busy and prefer not to use them.

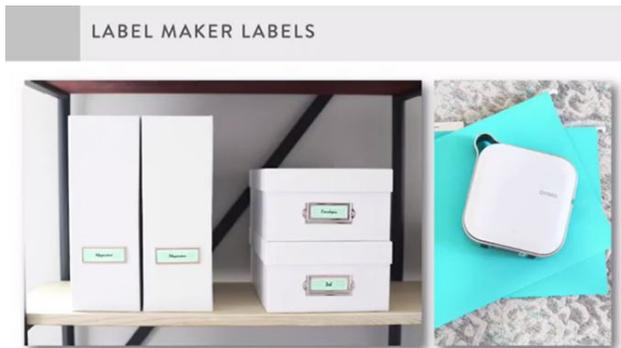
I love labels. I use them often. Particularly when I'm using bins or boxes that aren't see-through because I don't want to have to open every single bin and look through it to find what I need.

So labels can help save a lot of time that way. Plus, they can add a pretty, little detail to the space as well.

There are obviously tons of different types of labels you could use in your creative space, but here are the three types I find myself using most often.

LABEL MAKER LABELS

First, label maker labels. I currently use the [DYMO MobileLabeler](#), which is shown here on the photo on the right.



It hooks up to an app on my phone so I can design the label and print from there. It has a bunch of different font options, including cursive fonts, and there are a bunch of colors of tape you can buy for it as well.

I most often, when I'm using a label maker, use clear tape with black ink and many times I will put a pretty piece of Washi tape behind it for an extra pop of color as I did in this photo on the left.

I like label maker labels because they are fairly quick and they're also really streamlined and pretty.

DIE-CUT MACHINE LABELS

Probably my most favorite types of labels are adhesive vinyl labels that I make with my [Cricut](#) or Silhouette cutting machines. These labels are designed in a program on my computer and then sent to the machine. It's kind of like a printer, but it cuts them with a blade instead of

printing ink.



I love vinyl labels because the possibilities are endless. I can make them any font, any shape, any size that I want for a project and they are also really pretty.

The downsides to vinyl labels are that they are a little bit more time-consuming and the machines used to make them can be a little bit pricey.

PRINTABLE LABELS

Finally, printable labels. These are the first types of labels I ever used and they can also be customized pretty easily. I usually make mine in Microsoft Word, but you could also make them in [Canva.com](#) or [PicMonkey.com](#), with Microsoft Excel or in Adobe Photoshop or Illustrator.



You can find a bunch of free printable labels if you just do a search on Pinterest as well, so there are tons out there and lots of ways to use them if you'd rather make your own.

So when I make my own printable labels, I usually print them on white card stock. And if they are going to be in a higher traffic area, I will laminate them before I attach them to whatever

they're going on with either a Velcro dot or just with tape.

KEEP IT ORGANIZED

Okay, so you have your gorgeous creative space all organized and put together and it is looking so beautiful and you love it, but now you actually want to use your newly organized space, right? So, how can we make sure that we can use our space and make it stay organized at the same time?

PUT THINGS BACK

As I talk about in my organizing course called Impactful Habits, Organized Home, keeping our creative spaces in our houses organized all comes back to our habits so step seven is absolutely crucial. Train yourself to put things back where they go.

If this isn't a habit that you're already used to, it can take a little bit to develop it, but the good news is this isn't one of those things that you genetically can or can't do. Even if you're not great at putting things back right now, this is a skill and a habit that can be learned.

I know this because I personally am naturally scatterbrained and would leave a trail of projects behind me wherever I went. I'm not perfect at it for sure, but now after years of working on it, most of the time I do put things back where they go before I move on to my next project, so it's possible.

CLOSE THE LOOP

This is a habit that I like to call close the loop. So many times as creatives, we get really excited about making the thing. Putting together a wreath or designing scrapbook pages or creating a homemade gift for a loved one. But when we put the final touch on whatever project we're working on, we're so excited about it that we feel like it's finished and we want to go show people and move onto the next thing.

I've had to train myself to rewire my brain so that I am considering the cleanup step part of the crafting process. I don't get to close the loop and call my project complete until I've cleaned up my supplies and put them back in the homes that I've designated for them in my creative space.

It's just a subtle mindset shift, but by thinking of cleanup as part of the project that I need to complete before I can move on, rather than a separate task that I can worry about later, I am much more likely to follow through and close the loop completely, which helps me to keep my creative space neat and tidy.

Now, it would be ideal if we could just close the loop every single time and always kept our craft space absolutely perfect. But this is real life, right? Sometimes we get busy and have to run to an appointment before we have time to put things back where they go. Sometimes even if we're closing the loop, other members of the household aren't as great at it. And sometimes we're just tired, and we need to rest and things get left out. We're not going to be perfect at it and that's okay.

WEEKLY RESET

Another habit that we put in place in our house to help all of our spaces stay organized is what I call the weekly reset and it's exactly what it sounds like. Once per week, everyone in our family helps to straighten up the house, putting things away and tidying up any spaces that have become messy.

That way if we've gotten busy or tired or just forgot to put things away during the week, we nip in the bud during the weekly reset, putting everything back where it should be so that our creative space, and our entire house, doesn't continue to get more and more cluttered.

So putting things back where they go, where you've created a space for them, so important.

These are great habits to work on getting into in your household.

TWEAK YOUR SYSTEM

The final thing I wanted to mention before I wrap up is to not be afraid to tweak your organizing systems. Sometimes the systems we thought were going to be awesome end up being a pain. Sometimes our interests change and we find ourselves with new supplies that need a home. Sometimes we realize that a piece of storage furniture isn't really the best piece for the job.

None of our systems are set in stone. If you find yourself avoiding a certain part of your creative space or you hate getting out certain supplies because it's difficult or overly complicated, that's a pretty good sign that your organizing systems could use some tweaking.

This happened to me with my vinyl stash. I had always kept it in a little basket in my office closet, but as I started doing more and more vinyl projects and my collection continued to grow, I found myself running out of space and making a mess. I also bought vinyl several times only to find out that I already had that particular color, but I just didn't know it because my vinyl rolls weren't organized.

I finally realized that I needed to change the way that I organized my vinyl. I tweaked my system, storing my rolls in clear bins in a storage unit in my office and now it is so much easier to find what I need. So definitely don't be afraid to tweak your systems.

I know that was a lot, but I'm so excited for you to get organizing in your creative space. I have found that when my office or craft room is organized, I am much more likely to work on fun projects because I can find what I need whenever I need it and it's just so much more fun to work in my space when it's neat and tidy.

I hope that this class has given you some ideas to help you in your own crafty spot.

As I mentioned in the beginning, I know that sometimes the hardest part of any organizing project is just getting started, so as our way of saying thank you for coming to this class, we put together a free guide with seven simple starting points that can help you get the ball rolling on the next room you want to organize. You can snag the guide for free by heading to justagir-landherblog.com/starthq.

And everyone who signs up for our freebie will get a special limited time offer on our declutter your house in a weekend system as well, so keep an eye out for that.

I would love to connect with you and chat more about all things organizing over on Instagram and you can find me over there at Abby Organizes. If you end up organizing your creative space, please, please send me the pictures so I can celebrate with you and see all the progress you've made in your craft room or home office or mom cave or wherever. I would love to celebrate with you.

Thank you so much for joining me to talk about organizing creative spaces. I cannot wait to see what you do in your rooms and all of the cool things you create once your craft space is organized. I

hope you enjoy the rest of the sessions for Get Organized HQ and I will talk to you soon. Have a great day.

