ORGANIZING

An organized purse will simplify your life

I have always had a love/hate relationship with my purse. I love the convenience of having what I need with me all the time. But I hate digging frantically in my purse to find something, my purse strap falling off my shoulder, too few pockets, too many pockets, a purse that's too heavy, a purse that isn't heavy but doesn't have everything I need, a purse that's so compact that finding something is torturous because my hand can't move around, etc. I could go on.

Angie Hyche

Reading those two sentences, it looks like my relationship with my purse is generally much more hate than love. I have labored for years under the delusion that someday I will find the perfect purse — the purse that will end all of my purse complaints. When I buy a new one (usually only after the old one is completely worn out), for about a week I think it's finally happened, and I walk around blissfully thinking that I have finally found it — the purse that's all love, no hate.

Within a week or so, however, I have already identified a weakness of the purse. Or two. And within a month, I have full-blown buyer's remorse. Can you relate? And before you all write in to tell me about the purse that really truly is THE PERFECT purse that I need to order today, let me just say that your idea of a perfect purse and mine are probably completely different. And I am a wee bit picky, to say the least.

What's a woman to do? Well, I may never find the perfect purse, but if I can get my purse organized and keep it that way, that's just about as close to perfect as it will ever get for me. If you really want to make a difference in your daily life, spend some time organizing your purse. I guarantee it will simplify your life, save you time, and make you feel like cussing less. Doesn't that sound wonderful? So, without further ado, here's my step-by-step plan for organizing your purse.

AUDRA STEADMAN

I may never find the perfect purse, but if I can get my purse organized and keep it that way, that's just about as close to perfect as it will ever get for me.

Find a large flat surface and dump everything out. Yes, everything. That includes all of the pockets and all of the items inside your billfold.

Thoroughly clean the outside and the inside of your purse. For the inside, hold it upside down over a trash can and shake out all of the crumbs and anything else that accumulated in there. Wipe the inside out with a damp cloth, a wipe or anything that won't damage the material. Wipe off the outside safely (or wash by hand or machine if possible).

Start grouping all of the purse contents into categories. Here are some of the possible categories: trash, cosmetics, snack items, receipts, medications, baby/kids, receipts, pens/pencils, etc.

Decide on anything that you can purge. There will be a few obvious things that can be thrown away, like wrappers, wadded-up notes, used tissue, etc. There may be some duplicates that can be taken out. For instance, no one needs 13 pens and seven pencils in their purse. There might be six different tubes of lipstick, including four that you never wear. And there will likely be a few things that really don't belong in your purse in the first place.

Get everything out that you can. Decreasing the number of items and the weight of your purse is critical. Be ruthless! Maybe some items that you use only occasionally could be left at home or stored in the car instead of your purse.

Assign each item (or category of items) a home. Spend some time thinking about which items you reach for most often. For me, that includes my phone, lip balm, keys, billfold and business cards. My solution is for each of those frequently used items to have a home in an outside pocket or an easy-to-find inside pocket. Which items do you need to be easy to find? Granted, many items will just end up in the main part of your purse, but if you prioritize items used most often, it will really help.

Reload items back into your purse, taking care to prioritize those frequently used items.

Figure out a plan to keep your purse organized. Do you need to schedule it on a calendar on a regular basis, such as once a month? Maybe you can just occasionally take a few minutes to organize your purse while binge watching a Netflix show. Organizing your purse is only part of the battle. Keeping it organized is just as important.

Here are a few of my favorite helpful products or apps that you might find useful for organizing your purse:

If you're tired of carrying around so many loyalty or membership cards, I recommend KeyRing. The information from the card can be scanned or entered manually into this free app. At the store, the information can be easily scanned at the register.

If you love your paper calendar, I get it. But I am so glad I converted to a digital calendar. I love Google calendar! No more "I'll check my schedule when I get home and let you know," no more double booking, no more paper reminders of events. And I can have access to other family members' schedules as well.

How about all of the random lists you carry around, like your shopping lists? I highly recommend converting to something like AnyList or Evernote. They are free apps that can keep track of any number of lists. You always have your list with you, you can share them with other family members, and if you have an Amazon Echo or Dot, you can use it to add items ("Alexa, add skim milk to Kroger list").

For replacing other frequently carried pieces of paper, I love using the Reminders app. It can remind me of something on a specific day, time or location.

For coupons, there are plenty of great free apps like SnipSnap, Coupon Sherpa, Yowza, etc. Most groceries have their own digital coupons as well.

I love using Velcro cable ties for charging cords and headphones I carry in my purse. It keeps them neatly wrapped and free of knots.

You can use these same principles to organize just about anywhere in your home or office! Just follow that step-by-step list, and you'll be able to bring order to any space.

I'd love to hear about any interesting items you happened to find in your purse, how your purse organizing went, and any organizing challenges you would like me to address in my column. If the idea of organizing your purse in a group setting with other ladies appeals to you, I have a purse organizing workshop that I can schedule with a group. Drop me a note at angie@beshipshape.com.

Happy organizing!

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