

The Clean Well-Organized Car

There's Nothing Like it!

If you ever have a day when you don't feel like you're accomplishing much and you're kind of low energy, clean out your car! It sounds like a paradox, but it's not. A clean car will give you a big boost of energy.

Let's start from the top and see what's in your car...

Stuff that May Be in Your Car Right Now

- maps
- your PhD dissertation
- paint samples
- cans of paint
- garden tools
- wood working tools
- magazines
- empty soda cans
- fast food wrappers
- coffee cups
- thrift store and garage sale bargains
- thrift store giveaways (that haven't been given away yet)
- cans of oil, antifreeze, and other car fluids
- emergency kit
- recycling
- bottled water
- makeup
- returns for refunds
- papers and bills
- dog food
- hamster cage
- aquarium
- food

What's in YOUR car? _____

I've seen some cars so full that there was barely room for the driver. I know it's rude but I get really curious and want to stop and stare. I know one professional woman who bought a second car so she could drive her clients in it – because her first car was full of stuff and it was embarrassing to use it with clients.

Is it Time to Clean Out Your Car and Get Organized?

When was the last time you cleaned out your car? It's amazing how quickly a car can get trashed. In fact my car needs cleaning out right now. It doesn't have much stuff in it (except the two drawer file cabinet I've been driving around for a week or more) but the dog hair has gotta go! And my nifty containers in the trunk have gotten disorganized. It's time to revisit the car! Unfortunately things don't stay clean and organized on their own. We need to intervene now and then and do a maintenance tweak. Or we need to do a major intervention.

If You're Not Excited About Cleaning Out Your Car, Here's a Quick Bit of Inspiration.

It's not a crime to have a messy car. It happens to all of us. We use our cars for so many purposes that it's not hard to let them get out of control and feel that we don't have time to clean them. There's a simple solution – schedule a professional cleaning.

Deciding to take my car in for a cleaning always inspires me to clean up my act to get ready for the professionals. Kind of like straightening your house before the house cleaners arrive. It makes their job easier so you get a better final result. I take a few minutes to clear out any junk that shouldn't be in there and reorganize the trunk.

I don't like to vacuum my car and clean the windows so I let somebody else do it. At the Auto Plaza they're organized to do it easily and efficiently, and cheaply. They have specials on Tuesdays for Women and Thursdays for men for about \$12 and a tip. They wash the outside, wipe down the inside dash and door jams, vacuum and do the windows. What a steal! I schedule this cleaning once a quarter to stay on top of it.

It's such a GREAT feeling to drive out of the car wash with clean windows, no dog hair, and an empty car! I feel like I'm **on top of life** when I get that together. Try it.

Getting Organized for the Long Run

You'll find, though, that this clean organized car doesn't last very long – if you haven't set up simple systems to corral the various things you really do need to keep in your car. So here's a short bit about how to set up some simple systems to help you keep your car organized and neat.

I organize my car just like I organize other things. First, I get rid of everything that shouldn't be there (paper, chain saw, filing cabinet, two layer cake), and I

put the rest into containers so I can keep things together and find what I need easily. Containerizing saves time, space, hassles, and keeps objects from sloshing around in my trunk.

Organizing the Inside

For easy access I put a squeegee under the driver's seat so I can easily do the windows after I go through the dollar car wash. I put a pen in the visor organizer. Under the passenger's seat I put my local phone book for easy reference if I need a phone number or address while I'm out and about. I put phone books from other nearby cities in a plastic bin in my trunk because I don't often need to reference them.

Reserve the inside of your car for things you need quick, easy access to. Put everything else in the trunk (in a container or two).

Organizing the Trunk

I have one handy container that holds car stuff like oil, oil filters, oil funnel, windshield washer fluid, fuel injection cleaner, etc. Another holds a variety of phone books and a sheet to drape over the back seat to protect it (somewhat) from dog hair. Use a container with a lid if you want to keep the contents from getting dirty. Trunks are amazingly dusty – at least mine is.

I used to have a container for emergency gear, but my sister bought me an emergency kit that I wedge into a corner in the trunk so it stays put. It contains an air compressor, jumper cables, flash light with batteries, blanket, etc. Don't leave home without it!

If I have returns to make, donations for the thrift stores, or recycling, I put it all in the trunk and wait until I have a full load to efficiently dump it off in one trip. This saves time, money, hassles, and energy. Just don't leave it in there indefinitely. Forgotten items tend to breed and multiply. Instead, look at your calendar and plan a convenient trip on the way home from work or in an off hour when there won't be much traffic. Just make sure you know when the stores close.

Don't do as I've done! I've loaded up my entire back seat and trunk with recyclables and driven cross town to the recycling place to see that I've missed their closing time by 10 minutes. They have a big sign that says "do not dump your stuff when we're closed" so I end up driving to my van pool in the morning with a loaded, trashy car. Yucky. So do check the store hours before you head out to dump your junk.

Now for the Payoff

Hey folks, this is a time to feel virtuous—when you FINALLY clean out your car. There's nothing like a clean, well-organized car. It says, "I'm on top of life!" Sweet.

Take Action – Nothing Changes Without Action

1. Set aside time this week to clean out your car and set up a system that will help you keep it organized.
2. Have fun. You don't have to worry about doing this perfectly. Just get started.
3. Finally, sit back and enjoy it!