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PROBLEM ONE

clutter

There's a computer in there somewhere! See how organizing expert Jodie Watson tidied up Emily's work space, then do the same in your home.



three steps to a saner home office

STEP 1: Purge and file.

Jodie and Emily shredded unnecessary documents—old bills, correspondence—and filed the rest in a cabinet adjacent to the desk. Even the computer's desktop got a makeover. "A cluttered desktop can really slow you down," says Jodie.

STEP 2: Define the space.

Emily's home office is located in a high-traffic area (a small alcove in the living room) and had become the family dumping ground. To discourage this, Jodie suggested painting the space a different color—in this case, bright orange—to designate it as a work zone.

STEP 3: Keep up the good work.

"By spending five minutes a day filing and shredding, you can keep your desk clear," says Jodie. Small job, big payoff.

HOW ABOUT THAT GARAGE?

To see Emily's "black pit of despair" transformed, tune in to *Real Simple. Real Life.* in October. (Check listings.)