

## Five Tips on How Writers Can Organize Their Constant Stream of Information

Many writers are possibility thinkers – imagining all the different topics about which they could write. As they read news articles, books, blogs, or magazines, ideas spring to their minds as to how they might turn this information into a blog, an essay, an article, a book.

If this describes you, you may be overwhelmed with the stream information you want to keep handy for such possibilities. Do you cut out articles, save magazines, have post-a-notes marking your books, or have other similar resource-keeping habits?

What to do with this plethora of information?

1. Determine broad categories that describe your writing interests: travel, fiction, self-help, your areas of expertise – whatever.
2. Designate different areas of your file cabinet, book shelf, or computer for these categories.

Information you use most often should be closest to you when you are sitting at your desk – within arm's reach, if possible. Data you use less often should be farther away from you.

3. Set aside time each day or each week to file your new information.

When you find a magazine article you want to keep, don't keep the whole magazine. Cut out the article and file it or put it in a page protector in a notebook designated for that topic. When you save an entire magazine, it takes up more room and it wastes time having to turn to or find the article again.

If new information you want to keep is readily available online (newspaper or magazine articles, for example), copy and paste them onto a blank document and save them onto your computer to reduce the paper accumulation. Create folders on your computer that correlate to the broad categories you chose in #1.

If you gain information through emails, you can file emails directly onto your email account. One of the options when you read an email is to move that email into a folder. If you click "move," you will have the option to create a new folder. Click "new folder" and choose a title relating to that subject. Any email you receive that relates to that subject can now be saved under that folder title.

On my computer, when I click "new folder" there is a window that opens near the tool bar that asks if I want to temporarily allow that window to open. When I click that I do, I go back to the new folder and click it and another window pops up for me to name the title of that folder.

If you are backlogged with information already, set aside 15 minutes a day to reorganize your files and file new information. Suffering through 15 minutes of filing is definitely doable! If after 15 minutes, you're still energized, do another 15 minutes. Or if you are really motivated to get this task done, set aside 15 minutes three times a day. If 15 minutes is all you can bear, congratulate yourself, stop, and do it again tomorrow.

4. As you are reorganizing your files, delete or toss any that no longer interest you.
5. As you sort and file, make a one-page list of your broad categories, the subcategories under each one, and where you can find them. If you keep this list on your computer, you can change or add topics without it becoming messy.