

ORGANISE LIKE A PRO

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If you've ever watched MythBusters, you would know Adam Savage as the fun-loving tinkerer who loved to push the limits of his creations to total destruction. But spend time on his YouTube channel, Adam Savage's Tested, where he documents his personal workshop, and you'll find something unexpected: his love of organisation.

He may not have invented it but his favourite principle to organise by is called First Order of Retrievability. It's disarmingly simple organising tip: the things you use most should require the fewest steps or barriers to access. Not necessarily stored neatly and aesthetically. But reachable in a single motion.

I remember watching that episode for the first time (yes, I have watched it a few times), realising it was a concept that was very familiar to me, but I had not thought about it as a concept. It was just how I organised my clients' spaces.

The simplicity and common sense of most organisation concepts is still lost on many clients who see organisation as something that takes place in warehouses and supermarkets, not at home. The truth is, in your home is where you need organisation the most. Otherwise, friction creeps in and before you know it, you're living a daily routine that doesn't support your wellbeing at all.

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FIRST ORDER OF RETRIEVABILITY

Allow me to unpack this with a question: at your desk (assuming that you sit at a work desk), where do you keep the block of sticky notes?

I asked 8 people I know use sticky notes, where they keep them: 6 keep them on the desk, 1 in the top most drawer of the drawer cabinet, 1 in a drawer that's part of their monitor stand (so, technically, on their desk). Using my anecdotal statistics, 7 out of 8 people surveyed keep their block of sticky notes within their field of vision, out in the open, on their desk, within easy reach, where they used them most. That's first order of retrievability.

Why is that important? Because the things you use most often should require the fewest steps to reach and this makes the most frequent tasks effortless. And when tasks are effortless, you don't mind doing them, and nothing breaks your flow.

The orders work like this:

- First order: visible, reachable, nothing in the way
- Second order: behind a door, in a drawer, one extra step
- Third order: packed in a box that lives inside a drawer or a cabinet.

The goal isn't to make everything first order but to match the order of access to the frequency of use.

GOOD ORGANISATION IS DESIGN

The spaces that stay organised aren't maintained by willpower. First Order of Retrievability shifts your thinking from "where should this live" to "how will this actually get used". That one reframe changes everything about how you approach a space.

A well-designed space respects the people using it. And when the system works for everyone, it works effortlessly.

That's the goal.