

Everything writers need to get organized in 30 days.

The Organized Writer: 30 Days to More Time, More Money and Less Frustration

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The Organized Writer:
30 Days to More Time, More Money,
and Less Frustration!

By Julie Hood

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Thank you!

Dedication and Acknowledgements

To my loving hubby, who patiently supported me no matter how grouchy I got while writing this book.

To my parents, who stood by me, encouraged me, and wouldn't let me quit (and served as excellent babysitters).

To my mother-in-law and father-in-law, who love their grandchildren immensely (and also gave me many, many hours of babysitting).

To my children, who can now say, "My mom wrote a book."

All my love,
Julie

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Let's Start!

What does the word “organized” bring to your mind? Does it remind you of pristine, white hospital rooms (boring!) or your mother insisting you clean your room? Does it make you cringe? If so, don’t let this one word hold you back. Every time you see it, replace it with a more comfortable word like “designed” or “arranged.”

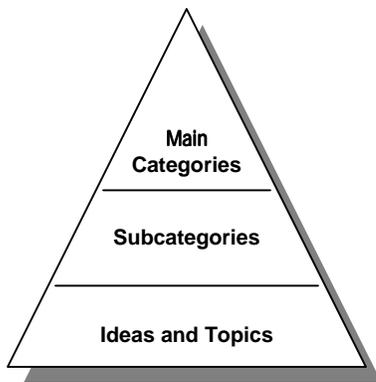
How to Use This Book

This book is meant to be a workbook. Print it out. Write on it. Highlight it. It is especially important to mark those ideas that interest you, but you may not have time for today. At the end of the book, we will make a plan of attack for these areas.

This book is arranged so that each chapter covers one aspect of your writing life and is assigned to one day of the month. Plan to spend about an hour reading and completing the first organizing task. You may need some extra time for shopping for supplies. The remainder of the chapter includes extra tasks and ideas.

Do what you can in an hour, and write down where you are. You can return again tomorrow, or move on to the next day. Whichever you prefer. But here is your first very important rule: **NO GUILT ALLOWED** if you don’t finish everything in one day! Next month, when that day rolls around again, you can continue. This book is designed to reduce your stress not add to it, so “no guilt.”

Your Master List



What should writers do? With so many ideas floating around in their minds, it's impossible to keep them all organized, right? Maybe not. Today we'll take a major organizing leap, and create a cheat sheet of the types of information you use. The Master List, your organizing bible, drives nearly everything you do.

The Master List is based on a pyramid scheme. The top of the pyramid contains only a few Main Categories. They are subdivided into Subcategories. At the lowest level are your Ideas and Topics. You should have lots of these.

For example, if the main category is Parenting, subcategories include Safety, Infant, Toddler, and Discipline. Ideas and Topics under Infant include Feeding Formula, Bathing, and Bonding. You can see a Sample Master List at the end of this chapter.

You can see how easy it is to work your way up or down the pyramid when sorting your information. Did you find a newspaper clipping that describes bonding between an infant and his father? You instantly know it should be in the "Parenting" Main Category, the Subcategory of "Infant," and the Idea and Topic of "Bonding."

The beauty of this system is the main categories and subcategories are *predefined* for you, and stored on your handy Master List. What could be a thirty second (or longer!) decision about where to file has just been reduced to a couple seconds. You will be using these categories everywhere—in your filing cabinet, on your computer, in your notebooks—so make sure you like your choices, and they do not overlap.

Task - Create Your Master List

Create your Master List with the form at the end of this chapter, or grab a piece of scrap paper, and make three columns. Label the columns: Main Categories, Subcategories, and Ideas and Topics.

List six or seven Main Categories you write about in the first column. Sure, you may have written brilliant articles on Horse Racing, but if you no longer write or sell them, select a more current category (remember Rule 6, Work Forward).

Take your time with this exercise since it will be the basis for the remainder of your organizing tasks. Think carefully about where you focus your writing. Use short nouns, and avoid adjectives and adverbs. Use the list below to inspire you.

Main Categories

Here is a list to choose from or pick your own:

Art	Mystery
Architecture	New Age
Automotive	Parenting
Business	Photography
Career	Small Business
Children	Politics
Computers	Religious
Entertainment	Teens
Food	Retirement
Health	Science
History	Science Fiction
Hobbies	Sports
Home	Travel
Humor	Women's
Men's	

Listed below are some additional main categories every writer should have:

- Other** – contains a few unusual ideas that won't fit into your Main Categories.
- Accounting** – contains all your financial records.
- Queries** – on Day 22 you'll see how to use this category to easily track the status of your queries.
- Manuscripts** – on Day 23 you'll see how to use this category to track your completed manuscripts
- How To** – contains instructions like “How to Write a Query” or “How to Create a Mail Merge.”
- Reference** – contains reference material such as statistics, grammar, punctuation, or online dictionaries.
- Cheat Sheets** – store your pre-made forms and templates in this directory.

Subcategories

List subcategories in the second column. They should be short nouns. Make sure they subdivide your Main Category into logical areas. Spend some time with this. The more accurate you can be now, the more time you'll save going forward.

You need enough subcategories to address all your ideas and topics, but not so many that it becomes difficult to sort through them.

Be sure your subcategories are distinct and do not overlap. The whole system falls apart if you have more than one place for the same item. For example, if we used subcategories called “Infant” and “Baby,” it would be easy to misfile.

Some subcategories may even need to be main categories. In our Parenting example, "Infant" may not be detailed enough for a subcategory. If you've written fifty articles on parenting infants, you may need "Infant" to be a main category.

Include a subcategory called "Guidelines" for market information you accumulate in each main category. For example, if you found a guideline for a new parenting magazine, it would be filed under Parenting, in the subcategory called "Guidelines."

Ideas and Topics

Next list the ideas and topics for each subcategory. These should be obvious to you. If not, rethink your subcategories. Make them clean and simple. Scratch out, rework, and pull out your thesaurus. You want the shortest words you can find since they will be on your file folder labels and in your computer directories.

More than Seven Categories

If you have more than seven Main Categories, you may be a packrat of ideas (see the description of a packrat on Day One). Try to focus more. Play a game with yourself to see how few words give you the same meaning. If it works better for you, group your thoughts inside circles like a Venn diagram.

Start with your seven favorite categories to keep your tasks manageable during the next 30 days. Then, once you are an expert, expand your Master List.

Save it

Once you've completed your Master List, use the cheat sheet on the next page to make a neat copy or print it on your computer. Put it onto

brightly colored sheets of paper and insert them into page protectors. Then place a copy everywhere you work. Until you memorize the list, you want to keep it handy.

Two days down...and only 28 to go. Stay with me. Tomorrow we will learn the one secret tool every writer needs to stay organized.

Master List

<i>Main Categories</i>	<i>Subcategories</i>	<i>Ideas and Topics</i>
1.	Guidelines	
2.	Guidelines	
3.	Guidelines	
4.	Guidelines	
5.	Guidelines	
6.	Guidelines	
7.	Guidelines	
8. Other	Guidelines	
Accounting		
Cheat Sheets		
How-To		
Manuscripts		
Queries		
Reference		

Sample Master List

<i>Main Categories</i>	<i>Subcategories</i>	<i>Ideas and Topics</i>
1. Parenting	Guidelines	
	Safety	Car seats, Child proofing
	Infant	Breastfeeding, Sleeping
	Toddler	Potty training
	Discipline	Spanking, Anger, Time
2. Small business	Guidelines	
	Marketing	Cheap ideas
	Accounting	Accountant, Software
	Taxes	Self-employment, Sales
3. Consulting	Guidelines	
	Fee setting	
	Selling	
4. Home	Guidelines	
	Gardening	Herb gardens
	Decorating	
	Holidays	Christmas, Halloween
5. Internet	Guidelines	
	Safety	
	Favorite web sites	Time savers, Shopping,
6.	Guidelines	
7.	Guidelines	
8. Other	Guidelines	
Accounting		
Cheat Sheets		
How-To		
Manuscripts		
Queries		
Reference		

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