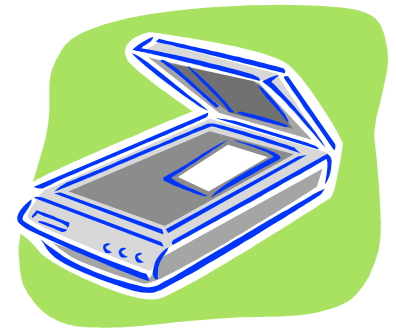


Easing The Paper Chase

My family is never quite sure what I will come up with next as a present request. Over the years, I have come up with some highly non-traditional ideas that they can give me as presents. Several years ago, I requested a 4-drawer filing cabinet. My 2-drawer filing cabinet had been overflowing for a while, and large piles of paper receipts were building even higher. Plus, we were beginning to combine what had separately been two family's old paperwork, and I just didn't have enough space to store all that. Never mind having room for future paperwork growth.

I will admit it – I am an information packrat. So I have lots (and LOTS) of receipts and papers that others would never even think about keeping. A couple years ago, I was getting close to using up the space in my [new] 4-drawer cabinet. I still had the 2-drawer one, which was fairly full, and I was also managing to pile up articles I wanted to keep that were pulled from magazines. So, I decided to start scanning in some of those many folders of receipts and save them digitally.



Having a digital copy cuts down on the amount of paper that you have to store, saving valuable living or work space. Plus, you can make multiple backup copies if needed and store them in various lockboxes or physical locations to provide a recovery plan. A side bonus is that the digital version also makes for easier searching through the digital copy if you saved it in PDF format. Think of all the time you'll save since you no longer have to physically thumb through all those papers and eyeball them!

I have slowly been getting my files scanned in to digital form. Not only do I have lots of files to scan in, but my attention span isn't very long. ~grin~ And all those magazine articles that I wanted to save, now can get scanned in and organized to be easily referenced.

Check your printer manual to see if it also includes a scanner. If not, a friend or family member may have one that they will let you temporarily use. (Make sure you have your papers organized and ready to scan in, so that you minimize the time needed to use the borrowed scanner.) After you have scanned in the paperwork, verify that the file is easily readable and then use a cross-cut shredder to shred the paper copy.

Before shredding, be sure that you've already checked with an accountant about which tax paperwork must be an original (most can be copies) so that you can store those few items in paper form. And, I found that some other governmental paperwork does not scan well due to the type of paper used in order to reduce fraud – such as car deeds. (Yes – I wanted a digital copy of my car deed. ~lol~) So there will still be **some** paperwork that you will need to store in paper form.

A couple of months ago, I realized that I even have another tool besides my scanner that helps with this project. No longer do I need to print a copy of something that came through email or that I found on the web – and then scan it in to have a digital copy. I can skip the paper-wasting step (yay!) and save the data directly to a PDF file. It sure took me long enough to realize that! ~lol~

My favorite program to save to a PDF format is CutePDF – a freeware (no-cost) product that does not have annoying advertisements or watermarks or any other deficiency that freeware programs tend to have. Plus, you don't have to worry about malware or spyware with this group. And this program will allow you to save from ANY program since you actually **print** the page(s) to the PDF file. (Just choose CutePDF Writer from your list of printers and then it prompts you to name the file and choose its location.) You can download it from <http://cutepdf.com> – be sure to choose the one at the top that says “free download”, since there are also some trial versions of some of their other programs available on that same page.

CutePDF is the program that I use for all the PDF files that I place on my website. So if you need to see examples before you download the program, just check out any of the articles or recipes on my site. And even though I've had it installed and used it for my website files for several years, it didn't register that I could save information from other websites or from my email using the program. Maybe I'm finally realizing it because I'm finally starting to go digital on other items that I've held off on switching until just recently (books, music, etc). Whatever the reason, I'm glad that I realized I could use that tool more fully.

So, when do **you** start digitizing your paperwork?

About The Author

Marie Rice is the founder and editor of PartOfTheWhole.com - wellness for body, mind, and spirit. She enjoys helping others reach their goals. When she's not online, Marie's spending time with her family, gardening, doing crafts, or **most likely** – reading a book!

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