

## Tackling the Tack

Sarah Rashed

The floor was littered with barbie dolls, legos, books, crayons, and loose paper masked beneath a layer of clothes that I would inevitably step on. I did my usual dance of bounding from the doorway of my room to the bed opposite the threshold. Spotting patches of floor where the clutter didn't conceal it, I started toward my target. I leap into one patch, then another, and on the last, I planted myself then fell to the floor in a messy tumble. My eyes shot open wide as shock cascaded over my body, turning me into a paralyzed lump. I looked down at my foot screaming in agony as blood streamed down my leg— I had leapt straight onto a thumb tack. I hadn't seen it hidden beneath the muddle of my belongings and it was clear to me my pigsty-room days were over.

After the thumb tack, I purged my room of all unnecessary belongings and objects scattered across my floor. I deep cleaned the space by ridding of long unused belongings and putting those I decided to keep in their rightful places. The necessity to clean was born of my impaled foot, but seeing my newly cleaned room gave me great gratification. I could finally see my floor and my room was actually appealing to look at.

Once there was nothing left to throw out, cleaning became a matter of arranging my belongings. I would innovate new methods of organization out of cardboard and hot glue specific to whatever item I had. On one occasion, I made a stand for a scroll of paper out of kabob skewers and on another, I made separators out of cardboard to help maintain color coordinated sections in my closet. These creations fixed trivial problems, but I saw the value in the simplification they offered. My belongings became increasingly accessible.

In high school, my organizing efforts grew tremendously.

In Latin, I followed a color coded labelling system to help me decipher the various noun and verb functions. If you're not familiar with Latin nouns and verbs, I'll briefly explain. There are categories called cases indicated by endings of a noun, and among those nouns are declensions (five total) which indicate what those endings are. The cases—nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, ablative, vocative, and locative—have different functions in a sentence. Verbs on the other hand have five different categories which change their meaning: person, number, tense, voice, and mood. All this to say Latin is clearly a beast of a language, so keeping track of the various intricacies of the language became infinitely easier with labelling. Rather than being overwhelmed by a plethora of possible sentence transitions, I could narrow down the list to only about one or two. What a relief.

In English, I became more deliberate in my approach to writing. I started decluttering thoughts and ideas in my head with brainstorming and outlines. I began to focus more on the most important and relevant details. The purging that had taken place in my room years before was now taking place in my writing. I learned how to be more articulate and precise since my mind was debugged of unnecessary ideas allowing me to understand and visualize effectively.

Organization came to me out of literal pain. Stepping on a tack was an eye opening experience that showed me how futile a messy lifestyle is. Rather than hopping my way through my room, I could've simply walked. Rather than hoarding unnecessary belongings I would never use, I could've rid of them and obtained extra space. I was led into a world of simplification that now helps me maintain a clean space and work efficiently in areas like Latin and English. As I

evolve, I know I will continue to purge unnecessary belongings and innovate organizing methods because it's only a small price to pay for a world of convenience and relief.