

Organizational Strategies for Students at Home



- **Label where things should go.** Affix pictures or text on clear plastic containers to show what goes in each container.
- **Schedule an after-dinner cleanup.** Set aside five minutes after dinner to clean up the common areas in the house (living room, countertops, mudroom). Set a timer, put on some lively music, and have the family pitch in. Make it a daily routine!
- **Have your child stay put when cleaning up his work area.** Instead of taking away the stuff that belongs in other rooms, have him make piles. One for the bedroom, one for the kitchen, one for the playroom. If he walks off to another area, chances are, he will get sidetracked.
- **Buy your child a corkboard and pins** — for hanging up important papers that might get lost on a cluttered desk.
- **Assemble a homework supply kit.** Place in a see-through plastic container, with a lid, everything she will need to complete assignments — from crayons and a glue stick to a calculator and dictionary. With this system, it does not matter where your child chooses to study. The necessary supplies can accompany her anywhere.
- **Provide plastic sleeves for notebooks** — and insert them into your child's notebooks or binders for storing important papers that are not three-hole-punched.
- **Color-code entries on a calendar** — one color for school-related stuff, another for sports, a third for social activities.
- **Take a photograph of what neatness should look like** — whether it's in a backpack or your child's workspace. Have your child compare his work to the photograph and critique himself. Did he do a five-star job (his work looks exactly like the photo), a three-star job (only a couple of things out of place), or a one-star job (he made an effort but seemed to run out of steam)?
- **Put up a large whiteboard that includes a space for a calendar.** Give each family member a different-colored marker to write down tasks and events for the week, so each can easily spot his or her own.

- **Have your child design a system that works for him.** An organizational system that works for you is unlikely to work as well for your child.
- **Take out the academic component.** When helping your child organize his backpack or workspace, don't say anything about his terrible handwriting or a paper his teacher has marked up with comments. Continue organizing. You are working on organization, not academics.
- **Make organization a family affair.** Sometimes entire families are organizationally challenged. If so, admit your difficulties and ask the family to choose a problem to tackle. Design a system and get a commitment from family members to stick with the program for a few weeks to see if it helps. Hold a meeting after one week to evaluate and fine-tune the system, and decide on a reward if everyone makes it through week two.
- **Make Lists** Spend time each night with your child going through what the plans are for the next day, what assignments are due, to do lists etc.
- **Make a study/homework area.** Designate a quiet, well-lit area for studying.
- **Schedule consistent homework/study times.** Structure in the form of routines will help with the ability to stay organized.
- **Tackle one mess at a time.** Parents' biggest downfall is having kids organize their room, backpack, and homework space all at once. Choose one task, get that system up and running, and, after a month or two, move on to another task.