

## Improving Your Child's School ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

A common cause of poor school performance and grades is disorganization. Below is a list of situations that may be a sign that your child is having problems with organization and planning.

- ☐ Fails to bring home homework assignments
- ☐ Does not know the exact homework assignment
- ☐ Fails to return completed homework
- ☐ Does not know when the teacher gives homework (e.g., days of the week)
- ☐ Does not know how the teacher typically informs students of the homework assignments
- ☐ Fails to bring home books or needed materials
- ☐ Does not know when assignments are due
- ☐ Does not have papers and study guides to study for test
- ☐ Does not know when tests are scheduled
- ☐ Does not have a regular study space
- ☐ Does not have needed supplies for homework
- ☐ Waits until the last minute to start homework/studying
- ☐ Runs out of time when studying for tests

If your child has problems in these areas, she may need to learn organizational skills. Below are methods that can improve your child's school organization. To stay organized, your child needs to plan and keep track of assignments, books, and papers.

### PLANNING

Most children have important social and recreational activities going on throughout the week. To be able to do these activities and still have enough time to get homework completed and study for tests, your child will need to plan. A good way of keeping track of schoolwork and other activities is through a daily and weekly schedule (see figure below).

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
	Game 7:30	SS Test Guitar lesson 5:00	Book report due	Spelling test		Pool party 4:00

<u>Things to do today</u>	
3:00-3:45	Snack and TV
3:45-4:45	Homework
1.	Read
2.	Math worksheet
3.	Write out spelling words
5:00-6:00	Eat supper
6:00-7:30	Baseball practice
7:30-8:00	Free time
8:00-8:30	Practice instrument

Before school, your child could use the schedule as a reminder of his daily activities and what books to bring home. After school, the schedule can help organize your child's time.

Provide your child with a way to record a daily and weekly schedule. A dry erase marker board or a large paper schedule attached to the bedroom wall provides a good way for a young child to

see the activities of the week at a glance. Older children could use a smaller, week-at-a-glance calendar.

At the beginning of the week, have your child list out all the activities for the week. This will help your child plan. For example, if there is a Social Studies test on Wednesday and your child needs two days to study for it, he can plan to bring his book home Monday and Tuesday nights.

Help your child decide what she needs to do each day and when to do it. This should include a listing of all homework assignments and other activities and responsibilities. It is good to order the homework assignments, sandwiching the harder assignments between the easier ones.

## ORGANIZING METHODS

### Keeping Track of Assignments

Your child needs to use a method to keep track of assignments. Most teachers have a particular way of informing students of homework, tests, and other assignments. For example, some teachers write the homework assignments on the board at the end of class. Others provide the assignment verbally to the students. If your child does not know how and when his teacher informs the class of assignments, he should talk with the teacher.

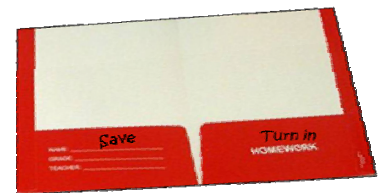
Most schools provide their students with a journal to keep track of assignments. Your child should use this journal to write down daily assignments, test dates, project instructions, and other important school information. If the school does not provide one, your child could use a simple spiral pad or a daily planning calendar. Many office supply stores carry different types and styles of notepads that your child can use as an assignment journal.



Your child needs to develop the habit of writing down assignments, carrying her assignment journal to and from school, and checking it each day.

### Keeping Track of Papers

Your child should use a folder to keep track of papers that need to go between school and home. He could use a simple two-pocket folder (see figure). One pocket can be for papers that need to be turned in the next day. The other pocket can be for papers that may be needed later, such as study guides and papers needed for studying for tests. Your child could also use a folder with multiple pockets to keep his papers organized by subject.



Your child needs to develop the habit of putting the papers in the correct pocket and bringing the folder to and from school each day.

### Keeping Track of Books

In order to complete homework and study for tests, your child needs to remember to bring the right books home. Your child needs to check his weekly schedule each morning and his assignment journal before leaving school each day to see what books to bring home. You and the teacher may need to remind him to do this as he is developing this habit.

Your child could position in his locker or desk books that need to go home. For example, he could put the books to go home on a particular shelf in the locker or turn the bindings of the books toward the back of the locker/desk. If your child regularly has trouble remembering which books to bring home, he may need to bring every book home every night.

## **Nightly Planning Time**

At the end of each study time, have your child spend a few minutes doing a “nightly planning time.” During this time, she should organize her papers, books, and study materials. She should place all papers in their proper place in the homework folder. There should be no loose papers in books or the backpack. She should place all the books in her backpack. She should organize her home study space and supplies. Finally, she should check her weekly schedule to make sure it is up to date and see what is coming up.

Your child needs to develop the habit of spending a few minutes after each home study period doing this type of final organizing and planning.

## **TEACHING YOUR CHILD ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS**

You play an important role in teaching your child to stay organized. Your child should practice the skills until they become a habit. You could use this four-step process to teach your child organizational skills.

### **Set and Communicate High Expectations**

What you expect from your child plays an important role in her motivation. You communicate your expectations through what you say and do. You should frequently express that you expect your child to plan and use specific organizational methods every day. You communicate the importance of staying organized by showing interest. This means you ask about and check that your child is using of the skills every day.

Your child may not want to practice the organizational skills. You should communicate that you understand that staying organized is not fun, but that is part of the work she is responsible for, and that her life will be better if she stays organized.

### **Teach Specific Organizational Skills**

At first, show your child how to use the organizational methods correctly. You may need to ask the teacher to check that your child is doing the skills correctly at school. For example, the teacher may need to show your child how to write her assignments in her assignment journal at school. You may need to show your child several times how to do the skills before she will be able to do them on her own.

### **Monitor Your Child’s Use of the Skills**

Frequently remind your child to use the skills. Each day, watch your child do the skills at home. Keep in close communication with the teacher to check if your child is using the skills at school. You should expect to spend most the school year monitoring your child’s use of the organizational skills at home. You will always need to stay involved with your child’s education; however, you should expect to spend less time as she develops her skills.

### **Reward Use of the Skills**

You can increase motivation and strengthen your child’s organizational skills by rewarding him when he uses them. Give your child frequent praise for the effort he puts into keeping organized. It is good to use praise soon, often, and powerfully. Praise your child immediately after you see him use each skill correctly. At first, praise each organizational behavior. After the behavior becomes a habit, you should still use praise, but you can use it less frequently. A powerful praise is one given in a warm tone of voice and includes a statement of what pleased you. For example, “I like how you wrote down all your assignments in your journal today, great job!”

You could also use tangible rewards to motivate your child to use the organizational skills. You could provide her with small, but meaningful rewards for using the skills each day. In addition, you could add up the good days and provide a larger weekly reward for meeting some set goal, such as using the organizational skills correctly at least three days of the week. A behavior chart like the one below is a good way to manage tangible rewards.

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Stayed organized	★		★	★	

Reward goal: at least 3 good days

Reward: Rent a video movie



Center for Effective Parenting  
Little Rock Center: (501) 364-7580  
NW Arkansas Center: (479) 751-6166

For additional resources, visit our website:

[www.parenting-ed.org](http://www.parenting-ed.org)

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