

Organization

Some students learn to become organized by watching and imitating others. But, some do not figure out what it takes to be organized on their own. Procrastination, tardiness, dawdling, distractibility, disorganization, and messiness often become problems for these students. For instance, they may

- forget what they have for homework
- lose or misplace things
- leave needed books at school
- waste time hunting for supplies
- wait until the last minute to start projects
- have a messy backpack, desk or room
- be late for many things.

Frequently, they may hear, "If you only tried harder, you could do well." However, their problem is often lack of organization. These students need step-by-step guidance in how to become organized. According to educator Roberta Schneiderman, at least 50% of the reason for lack of success in school is due to problems with organization. So, what can you do to help your child to learn to become organized?

1. Expectations and requirements.

Assume there is homework every night. Most students cannot finish all their homework during study periods.

Besides written work, students usually have assigned readings. They also may have long-term projects as well. Most students do not equate studying for tests and quizzes as homework, but this, too, is homework.

2. Plan ahead.

Daily responsibilities --- Sit down with your son or daughter and make a list of what must be done to be ready for school. Estimate how long each task takes and decide at what time the alarm clock should be set so everything gets done. Try to have your son or daughter do as much as possible the night before to allow for a stress-free start of the day. Some students find it helpful to check off items on their lists as they do them. This strategy of making lists can be applied to homework and other daily and weekly chores as well.

3. Routines simplify our lives.

Routines involve doing the same thing each time the same way. Once learned, routines can become automatic; (of course, reminders may be necessary now and then). Same place. Establish a place where your child leaves his or her book bag every night. When your child finishes using the books, he or she should return them to the book bag AND put the book bag in its established place. Apply this principle of "same place" for setting up a "homework center." This spot is where your child does homework every day. Please make sure this center has paper, pens, pencils, dictionary, etc. Use a small box or brightly colored cup that remains in one spot for keys, lunch money, etc.

Same time. Set aside the same time each weekday for your child to do homework. That way your son or daughter knows that that time is set aside for homework.

Same props -- Homework/Message Folders. Some students purchase different colored folders for each subject. Then, they cover their texts in the same color. The result is a certain color means a certain subject. Color-coding makes it easier to find material.

More props - Calendars/ Planners/Date Books . Students should write homework in their date book or calendar as soon it is assigned. In addition, they should note when tests and quizzes are scheduled. When your child knows you expect to see the folders and planner each night, he or she is more likely to remember to bring it home.

4. Telling time.

High school students sometimes confuse thinking about a project with doing it. This thinking frequently results in attempts to cram weeks of work into one anxious evening. Unfortunately, the finished product is considerably less than what was envisioned by the student or the teacher.

5. Promises kept.

Work before play. When homework is completed, then come pleasurable activities such as using the computer, watching a favorite television program, or talking with friends. The promise, "I'll do my homework after this show" may be well meaning, but often results in homework not getting done.

6. Divide and conquer.

Help your child identify all the steps required to complete a long-term project or to study for a big test. Then, put the steps in order. Each day or week they should work on one step. Breaking big assignments into smaller pieces makes doing these projects less overwhelming. It increases the likelihood these tasks will be completed and completed well.

7. Use available resources.

Have your child use their teachers as expert resources . If your son or daughter is unclear about how to approach an assignment, encourage him or her to seek out the teacher for clarification. Guidance counselors can provide your child information about resources to help them improve their study habits and strategies to become a better student.

When we learn organization, we learn to "work smarter, not harder."