

# Getting Organized

## *for Schoolwork & Homework*



*Ideas to Help Your Child Do Better in School*



# Let's Get Organized!

Organization is one of the most important skills successful students have. Effective organization helps them keep track of assignments, finish projects on time and study efficiently. And being organized has another benefit children love: free time! Instead of looking for lost items or cramming for tests, organized students have time to relax, knowing they're prepared.

But organization doesn't come naturally to everyone. Most children have to learn organization skills, and home is one of the best places to learn them. Experts say students are much more likely to get organized if family members show them how.

This booklet is full of tips for organizing everything from notes to notebooks. Soon your child will become a more organized—and more successful—student!



## Organize Assignments Right Away

Throughout the school day, students are given many assignments: a chapter to read in history, a math worksheet or a report due next week. No matter what needs to get done, being organized will help. Here are some steps for your child to follow:

- 1. Write down assignments.** In a student planner or notebook, your child should clearly record each assignment and its due date. (Calendars can be used for planning big projects.)
- 2. Use self-stick notes.** Your child can attach them to materials needed for homework. At the end of the school day, everything with a note on it goes home.
- 3. File papers.** Have your child divide a large binder into sections for each subject, including areas for finished and unfinished assignments. Help your child create a filing system at home for saving schoolwork, handouts and tests.
- 4. Make to-do lists.** Each day, your child should create a list of tasks to complete during study time. Crossing them off will help your student stay organized and feel a sense of accomplishment.
- 5. Put schoolbags by the door.** If schoolwork is in a schoolbag by the front door ready to go each morning, your child will avoid having to search for it—or forgetting it altogether.

# Tackling Large Assignments

**F**or many students, large assignments can be intimidating. Whether it's a science project, a research paper or studying for a major test, sometimes projects seem so overwhelming that students put them off. But large assignments usually aren't as hard as they look at first. The key is organization.

## Plan Projects Step-by-Step

Every large assignment can be managed using the following steps. Have your child:

1. **Take clear, specific notes** about the assignment. For example, if your child needs to write a paper, should it have a title page? What about a bibliography? When is it due? If your child has any questions, it's important to ask the teacher as soon as possible.
2. **Use a large calendar** and write down the due date.
3. **Divide the project into small parts.** For example, *select a topic, do research, create an outline*, etc. Write a due date for each task on the calendar, working backward from the final due date.
4. **Track progress** by checking off completed tasks.
5. **Evaluate.** When the assignment is finished, congratulate your child. Together, brainstorm what worked well and what might work better next time.

## Set Up a Study Spot

The best place to do schoolwork is in an organized study spot. It can be as large as a room or as small as a desk or one end of the kitchen table, as long as it meets your child's needs. Together, find a place that is:

- **Well-lit and quiet.** Does your child study best near a window? Next to soft lighting? See what works best. Let your child put up a "Do not disturb" sign. This should serve as a reminder to ignore phone calls, text messages and other interruptions.
- **Organized.** It's hard to study in the middle of a mess. Consider creating a shelf area where your child can keep books and reference materials. Show your child how to set up a filing system to keep schoolwork organized. Your child might use colored folders for different subjects.
- **Stocked.** Provide a basket or box your child can use to keep supplies like pens, pencils, paper clips and a calculator handy. Make it your child's responsibility to let you know when supplies are running low so no time is wasted looking for paper or a glue stick.

**Tip:** Schedule time each week for your child to clean out schoolbags, throw away trash and restore the study area to a tidy state.

# Stick With a Study Routine

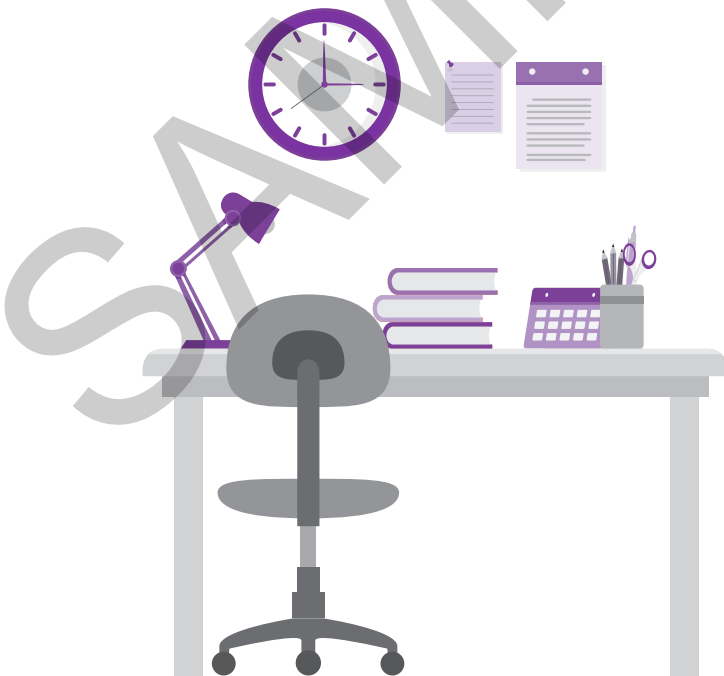
It's important to have an organized study spot. But it's just as important to have a study routine—and to stick with it! To do their best in school, students need to study every day. If they don't have assignments, they can review or do extra reading. But the important thing is to stick to the routine.

Many families have questions about how to arrange study time. Here are some examples:

- 1. When should my child study?** The ideal time is when your child is most alert. This might be right after school, after a snack and some play time, after dinner—or even early in the morning. Find out what works best. Then, if possible, have your child study at the same time every day.
- 2. What should my child study first?** Some students prefer to start with the hardest subjects because they demand the most energy and motivation. But for some children, starting with the easy parts gives them the motivation and confidence to tackle the rest. Experiment to find out what works best for your child.
- 3. How long should my child spend on assignments?** That depends on your child's age and skills, as well as the subject matter. Talk to the teacher to get an accurate estimate. Then consider setting a required working time so your child doesn't rush through assignments.

Some experts recommend the “10 minute” rule—10 minutes of homework per night per grade level.

4. **Should my child take study breaks?** Yes. Short, regular breaks help most kids think better. Suggest taking a 10-minute break after each hour of studying.
5. **Is it OK to play music or watch TV while studying?** Some research shows that even quiet music can be distracting. Experiment to see whether your child's results improve with or without it. Screen devices not being used for schoolwork should be off during study time.
6. **Where should I be while my child studies?** If your child is young, stay nearby if possible to supervise and offer support. While your child is studying, have a "family quiet time." You can do things like quiet chores, paperwork or reading.
7. **Should I let my child study with friends?** Sometimes studying together helps kids. They can encourage and learn from one another. But group studying isn't always effective for children who are easily distracted, or for those who end up socializing instead of working.



## Students Need Organized Notes

**W**hen it comes to studying, organized notes are extremely helpful. They keep students from having to find information and remember everything the teacher said. Share these note-taking tips with your child:

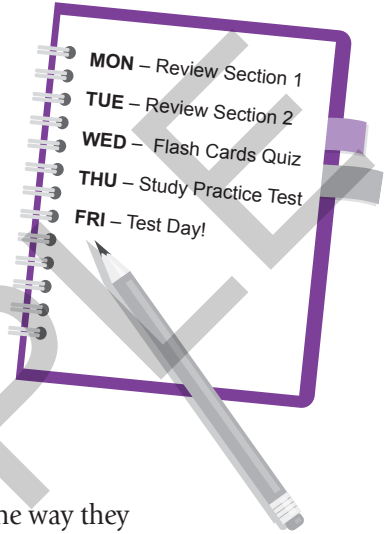
- **Find the method** that works best for you. Here are some examples:
  - Take notes in outline form—important points first, details underneath.
  - Draw a line down the middle of the page and put class notes on one side. Use the other side to write questions that come up later about the material. Write in the answers after asking the teacher.
  - Put major points on the left side and details on the right.
- **Be brief.** Write down only the key facts from reading assignments and lectures. Look for cues from the teacher, such as writing some points on the board or saying, “This is important.”
- **Use abbreviations and symbols.** This makes note-taking easier and faster. Here are some examples: w/ (for *with*), = (for *same as*), esp. (for *especially*), and ↑ (for *increase*). Create some new ones, too!
- **Be neat.** Write legibly so notes don’t have to be rewritten. Date and number pages so they stay in order.
- **Review notes soon after taking them.** That way you will be able to fill in anything you missed while the information is still fresh in your mind.



# Study for Tests Step-by-Step

Creating and following a study plan helps students go into tests prepared to do well. Encourage your child to:

- **Make a plan.** Schedule time to prepare for the test over several days. It's better to study things repeatedly over time than to cram before a test.
- **Collect study materials,** such as class notes, past quizzes and handouts.
- **Review.** Divide materials into logical sections. Then read them over as a memory refresher.
- **Memorize.** Use flash cards (or another learn and recall method) to study terms, formulas and facts.
- **Take a practice test.** Ask questions the way they might appear on the test. Study until they can be answered confidently.
- **Relax.** Get plenty of sleep each night. Eat a healthy breakfast on test day. Then take a few deep breaths and think, "I'm prepared. I'll do fine!"



## Keep Storage Areas Organized

Students have a lot to keep track of—handouts, notebooks, forms, graded tests and quizzes, assignment sheets, gym clothes, instruments, sports gear ... the list goes on and on. It's no wonder that schoolbags, lockers and desk areas can quickly get out of control! Children often need help figuring out which items they need to have with them—and when. Teach your child how to organize these areas:

- **Schoolbag.** Folders are great for keeping papers from being crushed into the bottom of a schoolbag. Pencil cases can keep writing utensils confined to one, easy-to-find pocket. Consider having your child start an after-school study routine with a five-minute “schoolbag cleanout”—that way, your child won’t be trying to shove completed assignments into a messy schoolbag, and will start each day fresh.
- **Locker.** Your child should only keep essential school-related belongings in a locker—it shouldn’t be a backup closet or pantry for storing half your child’s wardrobe or enough snacks for the next month. Suggest cleaning out and organizing the locker once a week, sorting things into “keep,” “take home” and “throw out” piles.
- **Desk area.** Provide folders, binders or other containers so your child can easily file away—and keep track of—old tests and quizzes. Have your child ask, “Do I really need this?” before adding anything to desk drawers. And encourage your child to keep the top of the desk tidy. It’ll be easier to get right to work if there aren’t stacks of paper to move aside first.



# Writing Requires Organization

A writing assignment can seem like a tough challenge for many students. But good writing starts with good organization. Your child can organize a writing assignment by following this series of steps:

1. **Choose a topic.** One of the best ways to do this is to brainstorm. Your child can write or draw whatever comes to mind.
2. **Prewrite.** Encourage your child to think of questions about the topic. What does your child need to know about it? Where can this information be found? Help your child find research sources online or at the library.
3. **Outline.** This involves putting information in logical order, like this:

I. Major topic

A. Subtopic

1. Example of subtopic

a. Detail about example

b. Detail about example

c. ...

4. **Draft.** Have your child write the first version of the paper, focusing more on getting points on paper than on grammar or spelling.
5. **Revise.** Now it's time to check things more closely and make necessary changes.  
For example:
  - Is the writing easy to understand?
  - Do the paragraphs flow logically?
  - Has your child double-checked the facts?
  - Are grammar and spelling correct?
  - Is the paper neatly written?
  - Has your child followed the teacher's instructions?
6. **Publish.** Turn in the paper!

## Other Things to Organize

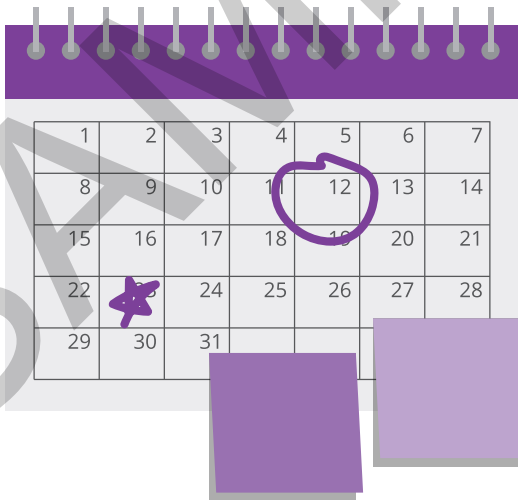
It will be easier to organize schoolwork if other parts of your child's life are organized, too, including:

- **Belongings.** Make sure your child has specific places to keep things. You'll be less likely to hear, "Where are my shoes?" or, "I can't find my house key!"
- **Recreational screen time.** Sit down with your child to make a media plan for the coming week. Select specific screen activities and a reasonable amount of time to spend with devices.
- **Chores.** Make a chart explaining chores and when they should be done. As jobs are completed, your child can check them off.
- **Daily routines.** Your child should be able to count on doing some things regularly. Examples include doing schoolwork at the same time, having dinner as a family, laying clothes out before bed or going to bed at a certain time.
- **Extracurricular activities.** Encourage your child to participate in after-school activities. Help your child manage time so activities won't conflict with schoolwork.

# Keep Up to Date With Calendars

**K**eeping track of family activities can get complicated. It helps to have one large family calendar, plus individual calendars for each family member. Here are some tips for using calendars:

- **Use a large calendar for the family.** It should have plenty of space for writing. Mark key dates, such as birthdays, holidays, doctor visits and after-school activities.
- **Have family members check the calendar often and update it weekly**—perhaps on Sunday night. You'll be able to see any conflicts and manage them in advance.
- **Use individual calendars for detailed scheduling.** For example, your child's calendar should include long-term plans, such studying for big tests and working on projects. Your child should check the calendar every day and before making plans. Record new commitments right away.



## How Else Can Families Help?

**P**arents have a significant impact on how organized children are. When parents value organization, kids often do, too. You can promote organization by doing these things:

- **Set an example.** Use calendars, make to-do lists for yourself and finish tasks on time without procrastinating.
- **Reward orderliness.** Look for opportunities to praise your child's organization. Say, "Wow! Your room looks so neat." Or, "I'm proud that you finished your project on schedule."
- **Practice together.** Do organizational activities with your child, such as planning a birthday party or dinner.
- **Start small.** Don't expect your child to organize everything at once. Ask what your child would like to work on most. Or pick an easy goal to build confidence and see results quickly.
- **Use a timer.** If your child is having trouble sticking to a schedule, set a timer. This might prevent dawdling, and the timer, rather than you, provides the reminder.
- **Ask for help.** If your child's disorganization seems severe, contact the school. Ask what the teacher has observed in the classroom.

*As the saying goes,*

**“The longest  
journey begins  
with a single step.”**

Organization is your child's  
first step toward success in  
school ... and in life!

SAMPLE

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