

Tips for Developing Organizational Skills in Children



1) Use checklists

Help your child get into the habit of using a "to-do" list. Checklists can be used to list assignments and household chores and to remind children to bring appropriate materials to class. It is recommended that children keep a small pad or notebook dedicated to listing homework assignments. Crossing completed items off the list will help children feel a sense of accomplishment.

2) Organize homework assignments

Before beginning a homework session, encourage your child to number assignments in the order in which they are to be done. Children should start with one that's not too long or difficult but avoid saving the longest or hardest assignments for last.

3) Set a designated study space

Children should study in the same place every night where supplies and materials are close at hand. This space doesn't have to be a bedroom, but it should be a quiet place with few distractions. Young children may want their study space near a parent. This should be encouraged, as parents can then have the opportunity to monitor progress and encourage good study habits.

4) Set a designated study time

Children should know that a certain time every day is reserved for studying and doing homework. The best time is usually not right after school, as most children benefit from time to unwind first. Parents should include their child in making this decision. Even if your child does not have homework, the reserved time should be used to review the day's lessons, read for pleasure or work on an upcoming project.

5) Keep organized notebooks

Help your child keep track of papers by organizing them in a binder or notebook. The purpose of a notebook is to help keep track of and remember the material for each day's classes and to organize the material later to prepare for tests and quizzes. Use dividers to separate class notes, or color-code notebooks. Having separate "to do" and "done" folders helps organize worksheets, notices and items to be signed by parents as well as provide a central place to store completed assignments.

6) Conduct a weekly clean-up

Children should be encouraged to go through and sort out book bags and notebooks on a weekly basis. Old tests and papers should be organized and kept in a separate file at home.

7) Create a household schedule

Try to establish and stick to a regular dinnertime and a regular bedtime. This will help your child fall into a pattern when at home. Children with a regular bedtime go to school well rested. Try to limit television watching and computer play to specific amounts of time during the day.

8) Keep a master calendar

Keep a large wall-sized calendar for the household that lists the family's commitments, schedules for extracurricular activities, days off from school and major events at home and at school. Note dates when your children have big exams or due dates for projects. This will help family members keep track of each other's activities and avoid scheduling conflicts.

9) Prepare for the day ahead

Before your child goes to bed he/she should pack schoolwork and books in a book bag. Clothes should be ironed and laid out with shoes, socks and accessories. This will cut down on morning confusion and allow your child to prepare for the day ahead.

10) Provide necessary support while your child is learning to become more organized

Help your child develop organizational skills by photocopying checklists and schedules and taping them to the refrigerator. Give children gentle reminders about filling in calendar dates and keeping papers and materials organized. Most important, set a good example.

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