



Organizing Your Kids for Success in School

It's back to school time! That means different things for different people, but if you are a parent of a school-age child, you may be finding yourself a bit harried in the mornings trying to get back in the groove. If you are tired of the frantic morning rush searching for missing shoes, backpacks, homework assignments, gym clothes, and band instruments, try implementing some of these ideas. By adding some organization, hopefully you will have less stress.

- **First off, involve your kids in the process.** Ask your kids questions so you can come up with solutions together. Whether you are organizing their bedrooms or their backpacks, the more involved they are the better the outcome will be. They will know and understand the system and how to put things back when you say, "Go clean your room." And they'll be more likely to want to maintain it because they are invested.
- **Set up a study center for your child and keep it well-stocked with basic school supplies.** The right space will depend on the child—their age, personality, and other factors. Talk to them about where they enjoy studying and can be most productive. Then make sure to have the supplies they'll need in close proximity. If they like to work on homework in the dining room, you could store the scissors, pencils, and extra supplies in an attractive basket so it blends in with the décor.
- **Help them set up a system to keep track of their homework assignments.** One of the best tools out there for this is the Trapper Keeper. This 3-ring organizer will hold folders for each subject, tablets of paper, pens, and keep it all contained with a zipper or Velcro closure. Help your kids label the folders for their current subjects so they know where to file the papers. Talk about where homework in progress and completed assignments could go so they can keep track of it.
- **Calendars are a necessity—for them and you!** Helping your child track their extracurricular activities and when they will do their homework in a calendar is a great lesson for them and will help you in the long run, too. Many schools give planners to each student, so check if your child already has one. Talk to them about how they might best benefit from using it. For you, a calendar will be handy to track when you need to buy or make something special for class. Try listing three dates when you learn of an upcoming event: when you need to buy the supplies, when you will work on it, and the date of the event.
- **Create a “launching pad” near the door for a quick exit in the morning.** This can be a chair, bench, or basket where your kids can stow the things they need to take with them to school. Have your kids spend 15 minutes the night before rounding up the uniforms, instruments, and backpacks and they'll have

only one place to look in the morning. Try posting a basic checklist on the wall of what they need each day.

- **Set up some basic systems to handle the daily influx of papers.** Try a clothesline low on the wall for displaying artwork. Another fun idea is to use magnetic wall paint (you can paint your original paint color over the top) and then use magnets. For the really great papers that you want to save, shop for large acid-free memento boxes. To deal with the other papers you need to sign or look at, try mounting a horizontal stacking tray (one for each child) near the “launching pad.” Kids can learn to empty their backpacks and give you their papers daily, so they don’t overwhelm you at the end of the week and so they get the signed field trip permission slip in on time.

Here's to a successful school year—for you and your child!

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