

Helping Children Stay Organized

Some children are born organizers - they do their work on time and brush their teeth daily and *they* usually remind *you* of things you've forgotten. Some are the extreme opposite - their room is a disaster zone, homework? what homework?, you have to remind them to eat or they'd starve. Regardless of your child's personality, parents can establish an environment of simplicity and organization. Here are a few tips for getting started:

1. For young children, place bins/boxes/toy storage within reach so that your child can put away his own toys.
2. Take children with you when you donate items from your home. This helps them learn to part with their possessions and will make reducing clutter easier as they get older.
3. Give children age-appropriate chores to help out around the house. From feeding the dog to taking out the trash and doing dishes - children should contribute to the work load at home.
4. Establish clear and specific instructions for what you expect your child to do. In regard to chores, homework and keeping their room clean - children are more likely to succeed if they know exactly what's expected of them.
5. Only keep current toys and clothes in your child's room. A closet is not for long-term storage. Rotate out of season clothes to storage in another place. Toys and clothes that the child has outgrown should be either placed in storage for younger children to use later or donated.
6. Children learn what they see you do. Be an example of simplicity and organization in your own space and they will be more likely to do the same in their space.

Know your child. Every child is different and will require different tools for staying organized. Here are a few examples:

1. Routine Chart - If your child is easily distracted while getting ready for school (or at any other time of day), a simple list hung on the wall can help them stay on track. List the morning's routine in order (i.e. - get dressed, brush hair, brush teeth, eat breakfast, get school bag, etc.) and hang it somewhere your child can easily see it.
2. Timer - A simple kitchen timer can be a great tool to help children focus on the task at hand. They know they are able to move on to the next item once the timer beeps.
3. Daily Schedule Chart - For children that need a bit more guidance (like mine!) a Daily Schedule Chart may be helpful. This is a great tool especially for children that may become upset or anxious when changes occur or if their routine is disrupted or different from the norm. They can just look at their Daily Schedule Chart and know what will happen next. I use a table top pocket chart ([like this one from Amazon](#)) and created my own inserts for activities that we do regularly (i.e. - go to the store, go for a run, visit friends/family, rest time, snack time, etc.) Each day these activities can be placed in the order they will occur so the child can see what will happen.
4. Family Calendar - Once your children get old enough to start making their own plans that don't necessarily include the rest of the family, a Family Calendar can be a great communication tool. Events that affect your teen's schedule are displayed on the calendar so they know when/where they need to be and can plan accordingly.