

## **Helping Your Child Stay Organized for School**

Staying organized is a vital skill for success at school. I'll outline a few tips and resources that will help your family create an organizational system that will get your child to school and back, on-time and with the necessary items in their backpack.

Routine...Routine...Routine

Staying organized is a full-time task. From the moment your child wakes up in the morning, they are using time management skills to prioritize, initiate, and complete tasks. Establishing a consistent routine will help your child learn these important skills.

Here are some tips for creating a successful routine:

- Create a checklist of the activities your child needs to complete each morning. Help them estimate the time it takes to complete each. Remember to add additional time for "unforeseen" events. Time is an abstract concept, and even very capable students can be poor time estimators. If this is the case, have your student time how long it takes them to complete morning tasks. Then have them work backwards to determine the time they will need to wake-up in order to complete all these tasks and get to school on-time. They will be learning important time-management skills through this process.

- Designate a spot where “out the door” items (e.g., backpack, lunchbox, books, wallet) are kept. It is helpful to use a visual to establish this spot. This could be a small carpet next to the door or a drawer labeled with the names/pictures of items kept that are kept in it.
- Link you child’s evening routine, to their morning routine. Make sure school-items are in their predictable spot before bed-time to eliminate the groggy-eyed search for items in the morning.
- Post the list of items that your child needs to bring to school. Make sure the list is in a location that they will see each morning, such as the refrigerator or by the front door. One of the most creative placements of a school items list is to attach it to your student’s backpack. Attach a keychain ring to the zipper of the backpack. On the keychain attach a laminated list (or images) of items.



- Build homework completion into the daily routine.
- It is important to consider three W’s when building homework into the schedule: When, Where, and What

**When.** Consider what times your child is most alert (e.g., after eating a snack), how long they can remain on-task before requiring a break, and when someone is available to offer necessary homework support.

**Where.** Designate a location where they can work with the least amount of distraction.

**What.** Create a list of tasks to complete. Ask for your child's input in this schedule; often it works best to alternate between less preferred and more preferred subjects with breaks as needed. Create a family calendar that includes things such as after-school activities, upcoming project deadlines, and special events. Involve Your Child!

- Organization makes life more efficient but it also takes work! The best way for students to learn to use an organizational system is if they see the purpose behind it. Organization is also a skill that needs to be directly taught; be patient during this process (skills are not learned overnight) and remember to celebrate growth. Here are some tips for involving your child: Show your child examples of your own organizational system. Share with them how and why you use it, whether its grocery lists or your "to do" list.

- Teach your child how to use the tools they have been given. Often times, students return home with fresh planners and folders provided by school. This is a great start to putting an organization system in place; however, we must not forget that simply providing the resource is not the same as teaching someone to use it! Sit down with your child and outline the steps for using it effectively. Discuss what visuals are needed to help them remember how to use these organizational tools. This might include colour-coding for different classes, in/out labels on folders, dividers, completion checklists, etc. Involve them in making these additions.
- Check-in with your child's teacher to ask for their input in creating an effective organizational system for school-work. Discuss what skills they need to learn and how this can be practiced at school and at home.
- Involve your child in creating organizational systems that capitalizes on their interests and abilities. Students who enjoy art might get involved by helping create a visual calendar of their after-school activities or by decorating their planner/folders to reflect personal interests. Students with an interest in technology might select an APP or online calendar they want to

use. Teach your child to reward themselves for a job well done! We all have ways we motivate ourselves to stay organized and complete tasks; brainstorm options with your child.