

ORGANIZING YOUR FAMILY FOR THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR

In the midst of buying school supplies and new clothes, step back and make the biggest preparation of all --- set up efficient organizing systems that will make the school year go smoothly for you. Give yourself an organizational tune-up. Just a little thinking ahead and preparation will make your family life much easier. And more than that, you will be training your family in organizing principles.

Choose two or three (or more) of these set ups. A 20% change can make an 80% difference in how well organized you are for school.

1. Make a place to put school notices and papers. I suggest a small desk top hanging file container with a file folder for each child and another for notices. Include another for papers to be signed so that you (and the kids) will know where to get them. The kitchen is often a good place to keep it. Or by a phone.
2. Have a central calendar, either a very large yearly one in a convenient area or a month by month one in the hanging file area, List every appointment, event, meeting and important date and time on the appropriate date. Some families use a different colored pen for each family member.
3. Arrange closet by grouping clothes according to type -- tops, pants, jackets, skirts, etc. Go further and arrange by color in each group. Hunting for what to wear really gums up getting off on time.
4. Prepare the night before -- lunches, clothes selection, and put book bag by the door. Set up the coffee pot and maybe even get a timer to have it ready when you get to the kitchen. Set the alarm for five minutes early.
5. Help the kids set up a particular place and time to do homework every day. Studies show that students who do this have consistently higher grades than those who vary where they do their homework.
6. Save time of cleaning and looking for things by putting everything back as it is used. To encourage this with your kids make a big sign: STOW AS YOU GO!!™ To make it easier, label each storage area -- use pictures for nonreaders. For fun, label in a foreign language.
7. BIGGEST TIP OF ALL -- Organize for order, the house and the kids' rooms. As soon as they are old enough to help, let them start deciding how to set up an organization system for themselves.

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