

Occupational Therapy Service for Children and Young People

Organisation Skills for School

This information pack is full of practical ideas to help children and young people get organised when it comes to school. There is advice on;

- How to organise their things so they can find them when they need them
- How to avoid having their bedroom/locker/schoolbag turning becoming messy
- Making doing homework less stressful
- And many more useful tips!

MY GET ORGANISED SHOPPING LIST

This is a list of school supplies to get your child off on the right foot. Your child may not need everything from the list, depending on if they are in primary or secondary school.

(See appendix for list).

TIPS FOR SCHOOLBAG

- The ideal school bag should have 2 main compartments and one small compartment.
- Compartment closest to their back = heavy textbooks, folders, copybooks, and homework journal
- Smaller compartment = pencil case, calculator, wallet, house keys, protractor set, dictionary etc.
- Avoid using a schoolbag with more than 3 compartments – this may cause confusion.
- Try keep the school bag clear from clutter – have a daily/weekly clear out.
- P.E. gear: use a gym bag but make sure your child does not put anything aside from P.E. gear into this bag (e.g. an English workbook) because it will be forgotten.



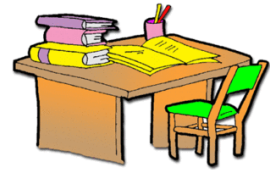
PENCIL CASE - WHAT DO YOU NEED?

- 2-3 pencils (and/or pens or fountain pens & cartridges)
- Sharpener
- Eraser
- Small ruler
- Scissors
- Paper clips
- Highlighters



'HOME BASE'

'Home Base' is a designated space at home for everything school related. It comprises of the Drop-off Station and the Study Station



DROP-OFF STATION

When you come in from school the first place you visit is the Drop-off Station;

- 1) Empty the big compartments of your schoolbag.
- 2) Put books, workbooks, copybooks, folders etc onto the shelf.
- 3) Punch and file any new/loose handouts.
- 4) Toss rubbish.

Ensure everything has a place and everything is returned to that place after it is used.

STUDY STATION

This is the desk where homework gets done! These are the essentials;

- Good lighting – main light source for the room *and* a desk lamp
- Chair – must be comfortable and supportive.
- Space – ensure the desk is large so there is plenty of room to work.
- Notice board – above/beside desk for checklists, to-do-lists, photographs, anything else to brighten up the space.
- Wall planner – above/beside desk

WALL PLANNER

This is the brain behind good organisation!

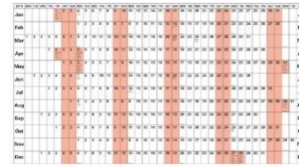
Here are some of the great reasons to use a Wall Planner;

- 1) It holds all the important information you need to remember; it never forgets!
- 2) It keeps all your important information in **one** place.
- 3) It prevents scheduling problems (you can check your planner to see if you have anything on before committing to going to a football match two Saturdays away)
- 4) It reminds you of what you need to do and when (no more nagging from mum!)
- 5) It helps organise school life – homework due dates, school trips, extra-circular activities.
- 6) It frees up valuable space in your brain that would be taken up with all the things you have to remember – you only have to remember one thing – **check your planner!**



Use a wall planner and fill in the following on it;

- Assignments – due dates
- P.E. or music lessons
- Sports matches
- Sports practice
- School trips
- Appointments e.g., dentist
- Friends/family's birthday etc.....



Highlight really important dates with a highlighter or stick-on star (e.g. project due dates)

The two golden rules for a successful planner are;

- 1) Put **everything** on the same planner.
- 2) Check planner every time you **come home from school** and every night **before bed**.

GETTING READY THE NIGHT BEFORE....

Make a checklist, laminate it, and stick it on your notice board. Go through it **every** night to ensure you have everything ready for school the next day. Don't leave anything to the morning or you might be late!

Example checklist;

- 1) Pack my Schoolbag.
- 2) Check my Wall Planner - Is there anything to remember for tomorrow e.g. do I have PE/extra circular activity tomorrow that I need to bring in special equipment/supplies?
- 3) Make my Lunch.
- 4) Lay out my Clothes/Uniform
- 5) Set my Alarm Clock for the Morning!

MORNING ROUTINE

Try to have the same routine every morning – it makes it easier to get everything done while staying on time.

Example of morning routine;

- 7.30am – Get up, get dressed
- 7.45am – 8.15 am – Have breakfast, pack lunch into school bag
- 8.15am – 8.30am – wash face, clean teeth, tidy hair
- 8.30am – Leave house for school

Make sure you know what time you should be doing each of these activities and monitor the time on the clock/watch.



GENERAL TIPS FOR SCHOOL ORGANISATION

1. Colour Code (see below)
2. Put your name, the subject and the date on all handouts, assignments, tests.
3. File loose sheets as soon as possible (at drop off station after school every day)
4. Assignment alert – fill in due dates on wall planner.
5. Have a notice board beside your wall planner for notes and to do lists – cross off things as you do them.
6. Clean out – locker & schoolbag (weekly)
7. Having 2 pencil cases, a spare one at home in case you forget yours.
8. If you lose your place when you're copying – place a ruler under the line to keep your place. Or try covering some of the page to expose 1 or 2 sentences at a time.
9. Highlighters – use when reading over handouts or notes to pick out the important information.
10. Encourage the child to keep a place for a list of questions when he has not understood something, and to arrange with his teacher specific times to go through these questions.
11. Encourage the child to plan out and write a list of what they need to do. Ticking off a list at the end can be motivating if it is of realistic length.
12. A dictaphone used in classes if the child finds it particularly difficult to follow instructions and may be helpful. They can go through it later in a situation where they will not be distracted and make their own notes at their own pace.
13. When doing homework, it may help if the child starts with a task, they are able to do or finds easier before going on to tackle more difficult activities.
14. Help the child to identify the optimum period they can concentrate on homework tasks. Set realistic time limits to maximise their ability to attend to and concentrate on the task.
15. A diary maybe useful to organise information such as timetable, homework, list of required items for school, school and local map, diary.
16. Any written information such as a timetable, handout or textbook needs to be kept simple. A card could be used to block out information in a textbook or on an exam paper that is not needed at the time.
17. At home, the child should try to keep only necessary items on top of their desk or table and be encouraged to take only a limited number (where possible) of belongings to school.
18. Identify a place or container for each belonging.

Colour Coding

- Have your child nominate a colour for each school subject.
 - English = Blue
 - Irish = Green
 - Maths = Red
 - Science = Yellow
 - Geography = Orange
 - History = Pink etc....
- Encourage them to pick a colour that has a connection to that subject (e.g. green for Geography), if there is an association for them it will help them remember which colour is which subject
- Stick a coloured label on the spine of textbooks, workbooks, copy books, dictionaries etc... so that when the books are in a locker or bag the stickers can be seen
- If you want to expand with colour coding, you could colour code the child's timetable (e.g. Irish class is coloured in green) & co-ordinate the colour of folder dividers.



HOMEWORK

- It is very important to establish a set homework routine.
- Ensure your study station is free from distractions – no radio or TV, no people walking through, no unnecessary clutter.
- Try and do your homework when you're not too tired.
- Have a drink on your desk, and have a snack before you sit down to do your work.
- If siblings also have homework to do, try and have everyone do it together.

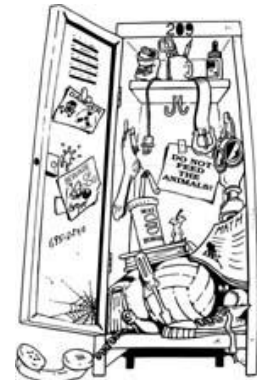


Timers: tend to improve a child's ability to stay on track. Students gain a better concept of time passage as they see or hear the clock ticking away. Also helps to keep student on task – e.g. set the timer for 10mins and they must stay learning their spellings for that amount of time.

Homework breaks – Allow short, timed breaks to help with concentration & motivation. Set the timer and tell the child they must return to work when the buzzer sounds. Encourage movement & fresh air, e.g. go out to the garden & play with the dog.

LOCKERS

- On the inside of your locker door;
 - Laminated timetable
- There should never be loose pages in your locker (or in your school bag/on your desks at home etc) – file them!!
- FRIDAY – clean out day.
- Stack books so you can see the colour code stickers.
- Locker keys – attach them to the inside of your trouser pocket with elastic and a safety pin. Also keep a spare pair in your schoolbag



REFERENCES

- Fox, J.S. (2006). *Get Organised Without Losing It*. Free Spirit Publishing Inc: Minneapolis.
- Moss, S., & Schwartz, L. (2007). *Where's my stuff? – The ultimate teen organizing guide*. Zest Books: San Francisco.
- Nadeau, K.G., & Dixon, E.B. (2005). *Learning to slow down and pay attention – A book for kids about ADHD*. Magination Press: Washington.

