



Janet Fox

Get Organized Without Losing It for Parents

As a parent, I can sympathize if you have a disorganized child! Except for the rare kid born with an "organization gene", organizational skills are learned. Here are some ideas for you:

- ≡ Early in the school year, help your child put together a binder, with dividers for each subject. During the year, help your child file papers, gradually allowing him independence.
- ≡ Find a file box to keep at home, so that as your child collects papers the older stuff can be moved from the binder to the file box. Keep the papers only so long as they are useful (for tests).
- ≡ Help your child set up a home study space. If the only space is the kitchen table, use storage boxes to hold things your child needs every day, like pencils, paper, a ruler, etc. Then the table can be cleaned off for dinner! Try to maintain quiet (no TV, no computer) while your child studies.
- ≡ Make sure your child studies at the same time every day. This way homework becomes a habit, and homework struggles are reduced. Have your child read if she doesn't have homework.
- ≡ Let your child take a brain break from homework every 20 to 30 minutes. Make sure that he has a healthy snack after school and before homework, so that he can keep going.
- ≡ Homework is important, and your child should study for at least 10 minutes per grade (i.e., 30 minutes in 3rd grade, and so on). By middle school, extra time will probably be required.
- ≡ Get everything ready for school the night before. This will reduce the early morning tendency to forget something important.

My book, *Get Organized Without Losing It*, contains other suggestions for students and teachers. I hope you'll find it useful!

Get Organized Without Losing It, a guide for kids to help them manage time and stuff, is available from Free Spirit Publishing. Visit www.freespirit.com or www.janetsfox.com for ordering information and more organization suggestions.



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Get Organized Without Losing It for Teachers

I'm a teacher, too, and I've seen students who have a hard time in school simply because they're not organized. I try to work a few lessons into my schedule to teach some basic organizing skills. Here are some ideas for you:

- ≡ Most kids have no clue where their free time goes. They wonder why they can't get homework done. Have students keep a record of their after-school activities and time spent on each for a day or two. Have them share any insights with classmates (there's always a surprise or two!)
- ≡ Does your school use a planner? If so:
 - Schedule a "planner walk-through" early in the school year. Students need to feel comfortable with their planners, and be able to customize them. Little things make a difference: "Do I write my homework on the day it's due or the day I do it?" Show them how to clip pages to mark the current week.
- ≡ If your school doesn't have a planner:
 - Before entering middle school, kids need to learn how to manage their time. Teach "time awareness" by having them estimate how long something takes, then compare how long it actually takes.
- ≡ You may already have a classroom cleanup time. I recommend that students clean up their desks, backpacks and binders, too. Guide them in this exercise to avoid the "dog ate my homework" look.
- ≡ Give students interim deadlines on projects to teach long-term planning. Make sure they write these deadlines in their planners, with a clear path to their final goal.

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