

HELP YOUR DISORGANIZED STUDENT

Tips, Tools,
and Solutions
to Help Your
Disorganized
Student



Presented by

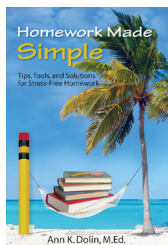


**Educational
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Tips, Tools, and Solutions to Help Your Disorganized Student

Adapted from the award-winning book

Homework Made Simple: Tips, Tools, and Solutions for Stress-Free Homework



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During my years as a teacher, I noticed that many students struggled to stay organized. The problem is not uncommon, but it can challenge even the smartest kid and his parents. My disorganized students struggled in two main areas – materials and time. I found that if they had a cluttered backpack, they often had a poor sense of time management as well. These children fared much better when I taught them strategies and systems for staying organized. Furthermore, when their parents learned how to reinforce these newly designed systems, results improved.

The famous actor and director, Woody Allen, once said, “Eighty percent of success is showing up.” I would amend that slightly: Eighty percent of school success is showing up AND staying organized. I’ve taught many students over the years who struggled fiercely in school. Those who were organized managed to stay afloat and achieve success. On the other hand, I’ve worked with tremendously gifted students for whom learning came easy, but their grades did not reflect their true abilities. They stumbled because their poor organizational skills impacted them in each and every subject area.

Does This Sound Familiar?



Test it Out!	A	B	C
	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely
My child can't find the materials needed to complete his homework.			
Important books and papers are left behind at school, leaving my child unprepared for homework.			
My child's backpack is filled with miscellaneous papers, many dated months ago.			
My child has difficulty staying on top of assignments, often turning work in late.			
His binder is messy with papers shoved into random places.			
My child seems to need more help staying organized than others his age.			
Long-term assignments, such as reports and projects, are done at the last minute.			
My child's grades would be better if he could be more organized.			
There have been times when my child actually completed the work, but could not locate it at school the next day.			
I have to remind my child to clear out his folders, binder, or backpack.			
The teacher tells me that my child is very bright, but also inconsistent and scattered.			

Total number of checks in each column	A	B	C

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If you answered “usually” or “sometimes” to the majority of these questions, this chapter is for you. I encourage you to read on even if your student is exhibiting only some of these issues. Putting a basic organizational system in place is beneficial for all children.

What’s Causing Such A Mess?

It is unlikely any child wakes up in the morning and decides he wants a barrage of negative feedback from his parents and teachers about his lack of organization. Life is easier for those who have these skills. Organization, or lack thereof, is based in executive functions which are innate neurological processes. Individuals with adequate executive function skills are able to plan ahead, organize, strategize, and manage time. They know which assignments are on the agenda after school and have the ability to prioritize. Instinctively, when a big task is at hand, such as a research paper, they approach it methodically, one step at a time.

Students with slowly developing executive function skills don’t come by these abilities naturally. Contrary to popular belief, these students are not lazy or willfully disobedient, and their poor performance is not a matter of needing to simply try harder. Instead, these children need more support than the average student in order to find success.

The Trickle Down Effect

Because organization is such a crucial part of academic achievement, it’s easy to understand how students struggling in this one area may be impacted in each and every subject. For example, if a student with adequate organizational skills has difficulty with geometry, he can still do well in chemistry, English, history and all of his other subjects. But when a student is disorganized, he has, in essence, a disability in every subject. With age, organizational skills generally improve. That is a

good thing because, as schoolwork becomes more complex with each year, these abilities become increasingly important. This chapter will provide you with the strategies to facilitate the development of organizational skills, whether you have a young child, tween, or teen. And, if staying organized has been difficult for you in the past, you'll pick up some pointers that will help your family as a whole.

Set The Stage For Organization

Before you begin to roll up your sleeves to clean out that backpack and binder, first, take the following steps:

Step 1

DISCUSS ORGANIZATION

SAY THIS: *"I know I've been on your case a lot about being more organized. You're getting older and I don't want to nag you. Let's get prepared for the new semester by setting up an organization system that works for you. Do you have some ideas?"*

OR THIS: *"I've been thinking about how we fight over homework – especially staying organized. I wish our evenings could be less stressful. What do you think is causing assignments and papers to be delayed or go missing? Can you think of a better way? I have a couple of ideas that may help. Let's start out the week on a good note by cleaning out your binder on Sunday evening after dinner."*

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Step 2

SET UP A "TIME TO TALK"

With your child, agree on a specific day and time to start the process of getting more organized. Set aside 30-60 minutes. Think about scheduling this meeting at a time that would be most beneficial, such as:

- On Sunday, to prepare for the upcoming week and beyond.
- Before a new quarter, semester, or school year.
- On the first day of the month.

Step 3

BE NON-JUDGMENTAL

Depending on your child's willingness, you may only have one shot at making this work. As tempting as it may be to say, "I've never seen such a mess!" when you unzip the backpack for the first time, hold back. There are many strategies in this chapter to help with organization, but they will not work if your child feels he is put on the defensive. Perhaps the most important ingredient to ensure success is your ability to remain non-judgmental.



HELP IS ON THE WAY!

TOOLS FOR THE DISORGANIZED STUDENT

The Problem

Garrett - A Scattered Second Grader

Donna is a highly methodical, efficient, and driven mother who wants the best for her son, Garrett. She cannot understand how he can be so messy at such a young age. Garrett is warm and loving, with an infectious sense of humor. On the other hand, he is also lackadaisical and disorganized. He never seems to bring the right papers home and is always playing catch up with his assignments. Garrett is one of those kids who seems to leave a paper trail behind him wherever he goes.

Donna came to my office to discuss ways to help her son. I listened to her concerns, taking copious notes. She began by wringing her hands and sharing, "He's nothing like me. I don't know where he gets it. Last week he couldn't find a study guide for a test. When I insisted that he empty his backpack, he retrieved a moldy sandwich, crumpled papers, and a folder that he could barely pull out because it was stuck to the lining with gum. When I unfolded each crumpled paper, I eventually found the lost study guide."

It was hard for Donna to truly understand Garrett's struggles because organization came so easily to her. I was concerned because, after all, Garrett was only eight years old and had many years to go in school. We had to find a way to alleviate the source of contention.

The Solution



Tip 1: Appreciate Differences

It was tough for Donna to understand that Garrett was a very different person from her. At times, she felt that if he cared about neatness or

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was just more motivated, the problem would go away. That was not the case; Garrett's difficulties were part of who he was. Although his executive functioning skills would progress as he got older, it is likely that organization would never be a strength for Garrett. Donna had functioned as an efficient, Type A go-getter for so many years that taking a step back and becoming more accepting of her son's differences was difficult for her. In time, Donna began to realize that criticizing her son got both of them nowhere. She needed to help him learn the right kind of strategies so that he could positively associate organization, homework, and learning.



Tip 2: Create A Routine And Put It In Writing

Donna and her other two children were naturally organized people, so she thought everyone else functioned the same way. She assumed that Garrett would be able to follow a basic after-school routine without losing materials, creating a mess in his homework area, or leaving important papers in random places. But he could not; he needed an *external* structure to compensate for his lack of the *internal* structure needed to get things done.

The fact was that he just couldn't do this alone, but he showed marked improvement once he and I created and posted a checklist. Prior to the checklist, he would throw his backpack in any old place, strew his papers across the kitchen table, and leave his completed work on the counter. No wonder he couldn't find his homework the next day at school. The checklist on the next page served as a visual reminder for Garrett. After a few months, he didn't need to refer to it each time he walked through the door. He started to remember the pattern and needed little prompting to follow through with the steps.

Organization

Checklist

Have I...

- ✓ Placed my backpack in the study area when coming home from school?
- ✓ Kept school papers in the study area?
- ✓ Put completed assignments into my homework folder?
- ✓ Put the homework folder into my backpack?



Tip 3: Establish A Homework Area

Donna found that setting up a special area, dedicated for homework and relatively free of distractions, helped Garrett. An elementary and middle school child should have about three potential study areas that are clear of clutter, such as:

- The kitchen table.
- The dining room table (my favorite).
- A home office (on the main level – it's too hard to monitor homework time if it's occurring upstairs or in the basement).

High school (and responsible middle school) students can work in any of the above areas or in their rooms, as long as they have a table or desk. Students usually need access to a computer; however, they can be easily distracted by the internet. Just checking a website can turn into an hour of surfing the web and instant messaging with friends. If this has been a concern in the past, but your child genuinely needs computer access in order to complete assignments, be sure it's in a common area that you are able to periodically monitor. Research can be conducted on a computer in a common area that you are able to periodically monitor. If your child continues to waste time surfing the web, ask him to print out what he needs and then turn off the monitor to remove this distraction.

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Of equal importance is having school supplies in one central location so that time is not wasted searching here, there, and everywhere for pens, pencils, or paper. Label a shoe box with the child's name or purchase a shower caddy to keep materials upright. This way, if the homework location changes, supplies are portable. Each student will need supplies specific to his grade level, but the basics include:

- Lined paper
- Calculator
- Post-it notes
- Pencils and erasable pens
- Glue, scissors, and ruler
- Markers, highlighters, and colored pencils



Tip 4: Create And Label A Dedicated Homework Folder

It's never too early to begin good organizational habits. From the day the very first assignment is given, a separate homework folder is a good idea. Garrett already had such a folder, so I encouraged Donna to take it a step further and label one pocket "To Be Completed" and the other "Completed." This is important so that youngsters get in the habit very early on of putting schoolwork in the correct place. When an assignment is given in class, it should be placed in the left pocket and when it's finished at home, it goes in the right pocket. Repeat the mantra, "Homework isn't done until it's in your folder" until this process is automatic.



Tip 5: Give A Bonus For Staying Organized

Giving a bonus is a great way to incentivize any child. A bonus is a small reward that is above and beyond what the child is already earning for appropriate behavior. Garrett was expected to follow all the steps on his checklist described in Tip 2. His reward was free time to do whatever he pleased after 7 pm.

A bonus can be given for almost any behavior you want to recognize and reward, and it doesn't have to be used in tandem with a checklist. For example, if you want your child to be packed up and ready for school before he goes to bed, and not at the last moment in the morning, give him a bonus for having all materials in his backpack by 8 pm. In terms of improving organization, consider a bonus for the following:

- Putting completed work into the binder and placing it in the backpack.
- Keeping the study area neat by cleaning up after homework.

A bonus can be anything that is of value to the child, such as:

- Additional computer time.
- A special dessert after dinner.
- A later bedtime.
- A small amount of money in addition to his allowance.

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Bonuses don't have to be given daily. In fact, an unexpected bonus is sometimes more meaningful and motivating than expected rewards. I've found that kids are likely to change their disorganized habits when they're supported with the right strategies and incentives. This is a far better approach than punishment or constant verbal reprimands.

The Problem

Kwon – A Muddled Middle Sixth Grader

Kwon wasn't alone in his cluttered world. His parents had a hard time staying organized, too. I knew I could help Kwon turn things around so that his grades wouldn't suffer due to his disorganization, but I had my work cut out for me with his parents. Upon arriving at their home for my initial visit, it was clear that there were no specified areas for completing homework, keeping track of school papers, or the kids' schedules. The three children's backpacks were strewn randomly – one in the hallway, one on the kitchen counter, and the other on the kitchen floor. The dining room table served as the kids' homework area, but it was piled high with magazines and old mail.

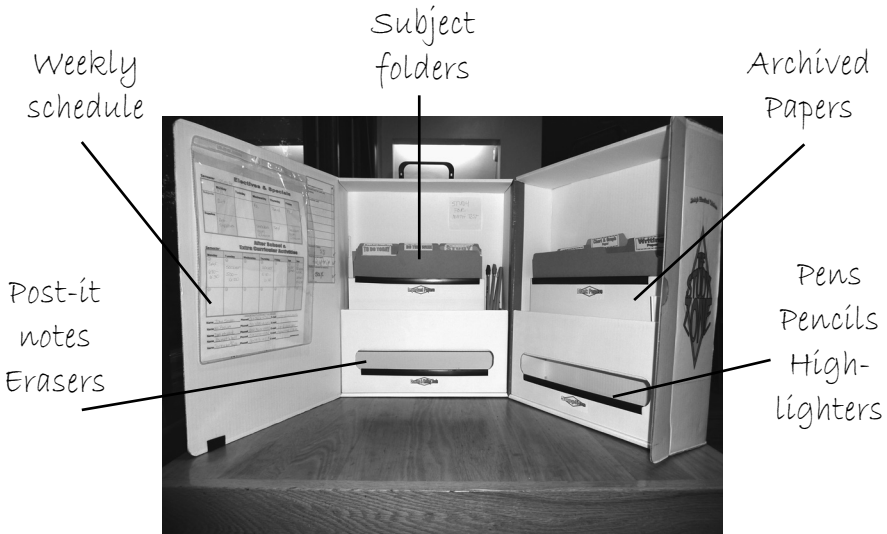
Kwon's teacher, Mrs. Green, reported that he was not completing his homework, but his mother, Sue, stated that it did indeed get done each night. And of course, Kwon vouched for that fact. In addition, Mrs. Green said that Kwon's desk was a real mess. He was never ready to switch classes because he had such trouble finding the right books, folders, and pencils. She said that his messy habits spilled over to the floor as there were papers scattered within a three foot radius.

In order to assist Kwon, I had to develop routines and systems within his household as well. Truly, his family needed a professional organizer to tackle the whole house, but I focused on organizational systems that were needed for academic success.

The Solution

Tip 1: Use “The Study Zone”

As a 6th grader, Kwon wasn't ready to do homework in his bedroom because he still needed some parental oversight. The dining room table was the perfect spot, but we had to clear half of it off in order to make it usable. Kwon needed a delineated work station that was his alone. I suggested a foldable cardboard study carrel similar to those used in schools when students are taking standardized tests (www.reallygood-stuff.com/deluxe-privacy-shields-with-universal-label-holders/). It provides an enclosed workspace, and when Kwon open and expanded it, it was almost like his own little homework island. The panels blocked out household distractions, and he was able to fold it up and put it away, along with his portable supplies, when not in use.





Tip 2: Create A Launching Pad

A Launching Pad is a contained space for everything related to school that needs to get out the door each morning. In essence, it launches the child into the day, equipped with all the right essentials – backpack, lunch box, library books, etc. A Launching Pad can be a box, large basket, dishpan, or any container big enough to house your child’s school items. Put it in a well traveled area, preferably near the door your child enters and exits from each school day. Since the dining room was adjacent to the garage door entrance, and it was home to his Study Zone, we placed a beige, fabric container on the table and used the back of the dining room chair to hang his coat. Now, all school materials were in one place for Kwon. In fact, his siblings liked this approach so much, that Kwon’s mother cleared off the rest of the dining room table to make room for the other children.

Once we set up the Launching Pad, Kwon had a system in place that helped maintain organization. When he came home from school, he tossed his backpack and school books into the Launching Pad. All school-related items were expected to stay in the same area. His parents got into the act, too. If they found a stray school paper, they put it in the bin. Permission slips and weekly folders that needed to be signed by a parent were placed there as well. Now, there was much less school-related clutter around the home.



Tip 3: Create The Simple Solution

Over the years, I’ve seen many kids struggle to keep up with a binder system that just doesn’t work for them. Kwon was a prime example. He used a binder that contained an elaborate filing system which required constant upkeep. Even though it contained tabs, folders, and pockets, Kwon never used any of them. Instead, he layered all of his papers on top of each other and placed them in a stack next to the rings – not in the rings, but next to them. If he didn’t hold the binder from the bottom, all the loose papers fell out.



Kwon admitted that he hated to hole punch and file using the traditional three-ring system. This didn't at all surprise me because many disorganized students feel the same way. Kwon needed a different solution, one that was easy to use and maintain. I introduced him to a system I have created for many of my students. I call it, "The Simple Solution." It's easy to create and just may work for your child, too.

Step 1: The first step is to purchase a binder containing an accordion folder. The pull out accordion folder is where all papers are filed. This way, there's no hole punching involved. The one I often use is made by Case It (www.caseit.com).

Step 2: Label each section tab with the subject name (Math, Science, English, etc.). File all papers behind the correct subject tab, putting the most recent pages toward the back. This ensures they are in chronological order. Papers can accumulate quickly, so it's important to archive old materials routinely. Check out pages 76-77 for an easy archiving system.

Step 3: Your child will use the small three-ring section for multi-

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ple purposes, but his first and foremost priority should be his planner, which must always be secured in the front. It should not be removed from the binder unless absolutely necessary as loose planners have a tendency to get lost. Although most assignments are now posted to on-line homework portals, not all teachers religiously keep up with posting. Elementary and middle school students still benefit from using a planner until they have regular access to a smartphone, tablet, or laptop during class.

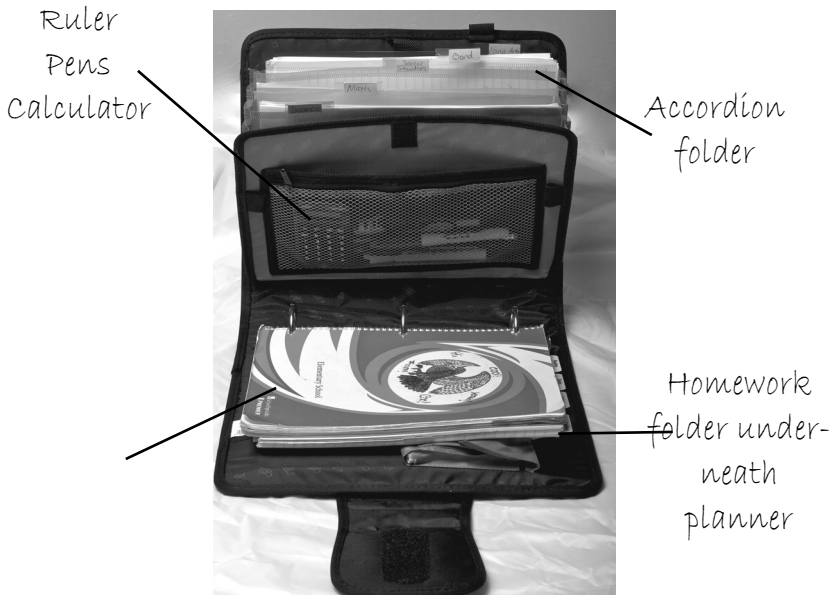
Step 4: Behind the planner, secure a pocket folder anchored into the three rings. This is a dedicated folder for homework in all subjects. The left pocket should be labeled “To Be Completed” and the right pocket “Completed.” Assignments given by teachers are always placed on the left and once they’re done, they’re moved to the right. This method is far superior to randomly putting homework in the backpack, tucking it into a book or another miscellaneous folder. Now, there’s no doubt where the completed work is located.

Step 5: Lastly, papers that need to be referenced regularly can be inserted into plastic page protectors and secured behind the homework folder. These pages will vary based on the child’s age, but may include the student’s class schedule or frequently used information, such as a periodic table or multiplication chart. This section is not always necessary, but is an option if your child will use it.



Tip 4: Ensure That The Right Materials Come Home

At the end of the school day, the last thing kids want to think about is homework. Bringing the correct books, folders, and papers home is a common problem that impacts many students, even the most organized. For Kwon, this is where the breakdown occurred. What was



needed for homework didn't always make its way out of his desk.

I suggested that he keep a plastic bin at the foot of his desk. As soon as he received a homework assignment, he was to put all related books into the bin. This was easy when he was at his homeroom desk, but more of a challenge when he switched classes because the bin wasn't readily available. Kwon improvised by placing all homework on top of the stack of books he carried back to his homeroom class. The minute he returned, those materials went straight into the bin. The end of the day was much less hectic now for Kwon because he simply had to dump everything from the container into his backpack.

Although this didn't make for a tidy backpack, he was able to achieve the goal of bringing home the right materials. When there was time, Kwon was able to neatly file homework "to do" papers into his homework folder. However, when he felt rushed, I told him that it was okay, to place everything in the bin.

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If your child has few books and folders, have him bring *everything* home on a daily basis. This idea can work as long as there aren't too many items to transport to and from school. This way, nothing gets left behind.



Tip 5: Declutter The Desk

Kwon and his family had come a long way. He now had a special place for homework, a Launching Pad, and a solution for transporting the right supplies to and from school. There was one nagging problem in the back of my mind. Kwon's teacher mentioned weeks before that his desk was very disorganized, so I decided to meet with Kwon one day at school after his classes were over to see if I could be of assistance. It was no surprise that he needed help at school, too. There were crumpled papers crammed into his desk, loose papers everywhere, and about 15 pencils that he really didn't need. Kwon and I discussed how he'd like to organize his desk, and we came up with the idea to place hardcover texts on the left, and paperback books, spiral notebooks, and folders on the right. His writing utensils went into a pouch.

A teacher friend once said to me – “You know a child's desk is disorganized when you put your fist through the middle and don't touch metal on the backside.” It's true. If your hand only hits unfastened papers, then the desk needs straightening. Kwon liked this little test to determine for himself if he needed to perform a clean out. If your child is willing, stop by his classroom before or after school to help him declutter his desk.



Tip 6: Encourage The Use of Photographs

Once it's tidied with your help or the teacher's, take a picture of it.

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Print it out in a size no larger than 3x5 and tape it to the inside of the desk, where the pencils typically lay. Children often need a frame of reference for what “neat” looks like. Some students are simply unable to visualize what an organized desk looks like. With this method, there’s no question about it!

No Organization System



Hardcover
texts

Large items at the bot-
tom of each pile

Binder, folders and
soft covered books



The Problem

Candice - A Ninth Grader Struggling To Stay Organized In High School

Candice was diagnosed with ADHD as a fifth grader. Her teacher commented that she was well behaved and “a joy to have in class,” but that she seemed “spacey.” Candice flew under her teacher’s radar screen in the primary grades because she was able to keep up in class and never caused any trouble. By her fifth grade year, problems with organization started to become apparent. Gone were the days she could rifle through her own desk for papers, books, and pencils. Now, she had to remember to bring the right materials from class to class. She was never ready when called upon by her teacher.

Presently in ninth grade, she is totally unprepared to keep an organized locker, maintain her binder, and stay on top of seven teachers’ expectations. She’s always backpedaling – turning in assignments late, asking for extensions, and borrowing her friends’ books when she can’t find hers. Candice is becoming increasingly anxious and fearful. She said, “It seems like I can never get caught up. Even when I do, there’s another project right around the corner. I hate this constant ache in the pit in my stomach.”

As I began to assist Candice's family, her parents asked the same question many others do. "Where should we begin? Our daughter is scattered in every facet of her life." Because Candice's disorganization was impacting her the most in school, I suggested that we first tackle her binder system. The binder is the student's lifeline to school and home. Without a well-maintained binder, academic success is virtually impossible as the right papers won't make it home and even completed homework will never find its way back to the teacher's in-box. The steps to an organized binder described here are one solution, however, your child may have a different idea in mind. The goal is to have a system in place that can be easily maintained. Allow choice, because what works for one student may not be right for another.



Tip 1: Strategize for Block Scheduling

Candice kept a one inch, three-ring binder for each of her seven classes. It was clear that keeping track of all seven was too much for her. Her backpack was heavy and jam-packed. Because her school followed a block schedule, she did not have each of her classes daily. Every other day she had odd classes (1,5, and 7 which were math, Spanish, and history) and on alternating days, she had classes (2,4, and 6 which were science English, and computer programming). To top off the confusion, course 3 (marketing) was daily. The even and odd days were also referred to as red and black days at her school since they were her school colors. I suggested two options:

Option 1: 3 Different Colored Binders

I suggested that Candice consider consolidating her seven binders into three: a red one for even days, a black one for odd days, and a smaller white binder for her third period class which she went to daily. This method streamlines the problem of too many binders. In the larger two

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inch binders, I showed her how to use a double-sided pocket folder for one class. My favorite product is:

Option 2: Two Seperate Backpacks

Some students need and want a seperate binder for each class; therefore, having only three binders is not an option. Candice was in this camp. She had three teachers that were very particular about how their student's binders were set up and there was no getting around it. I suggested that Candice use two seperate backpacks: a black one and a red one. In the black backpack, she put her even-day binders and in the red backpack, she stored all of her odd-day materials. Her marketing binder was the only outlier. She had to remember to bring it to school each day. In the end, Candice decided that this was the best option for her. She even came up with a great way to remember her marketing binder. She put a small piece of duct table by the zipper of both backpacks which read "got marketing?" as a simple remindner to herself.

Two Things A Binder Should Include:

1. Homework Folder in Front with Two Pockets

One labeled "To be completed"

Other labeled "Completed"

2. Second Folder with Two Pockets

One labeled "For Notes"

One labeled "For Handouts"



Tip 2: Set Up A System For Archiving Papers

Papers inside of any kind of binder system can pile up quickly. Students keep months' worth of work without clearing old materials out or they take the opposite approach and purge everything. A useful compromise is to use a Pendaflex hanging file to archive important papers on a regular basis. As students get older, cumulative exams, mid-terms, and finals containing test material from earlier in the year or quarter become the norm. Such exams are one of the Disorganized student's worst nightmares because they cannot find previously completed work from which to study. You can help your child overcome this obstacle.

- At the end of each quarter or month, have your child remove papers not related to the current unit of study.
- Label each tab with the subject name.
- Prompt your child to file papers behind the appropriate subject tab.
- Hang Pendaflex in a visible location such as the back of a student's bedroom door. This way, it's in sight and in mind.
- Post reminders on the family calendar or program the reminder into your phone and have your child do the same. This will ensure that archiving is done regularly.

This archiving system should stay on top of your child's desk or study area, so the information is easily accessible. If it goes into a drawer, it will be forgotten.

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Tip 3: Organize The Locker

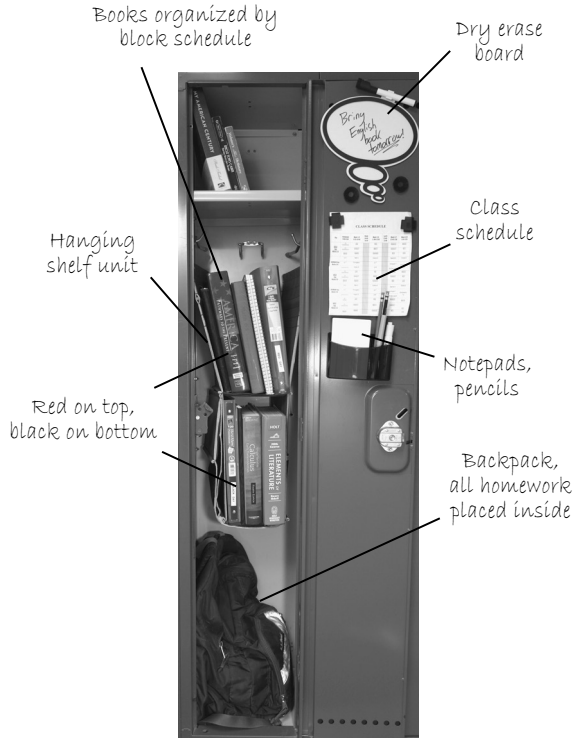
Some schools require students to use their lockers daily as they aren't allowed to carry backpacks from class to class. This was the case with Candice; therefore, an organized locker was an important part of school success. Candice asked me for help with her locker, so I met her after school one afternoon and we got to work.

In the following pictures, you can see how Candice's locker looked before and then after we met. The key with Candice, and all students, is to set up a system that is easy to use and maintain. We organized her locker by block schedules – red days and black days; however, the system can vary based on the student's need.

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Because Candice's locker didn't have enough shelves, we used Locker Works' three-tiered, hanging shelving unit (www.locker-works.com). This system can hold heavy books, but is flexible for larger items, such as backpacks and coats.

No Organization System



Then, with a label maker in hand, I had Candice create labels to adhere to each shelf or section. Lastly, she hung a dry erase board inside the locker door so that she could easily jot down any important notes. If you have a sneaking suspicion that your child's locker could be in disarray, open a dialogue. Your child may not want you to pay a visit to school, but you can at least find out what she needs, visit a local supply store, and let her pick out necessities such as those outlined above. Encourage your child to stay after school or arrive early one morning to get reorganized.

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Another approach is to do the work at home by equipping her with shopping bags to retrieve all materials from her locker. Arrange to pick her up from school and upon returning home, have her sort and purge, determining what can stay at home and what needs to return to school. Place all of these items into a bag along with any newly purchased shelving units so that she can reorganize her locker before school the following morning. Clearing out a locker is best done at naturally occurring breaks such as the beginning of a new quarter, first of the month, or just before or after a holiday break, giving the student a fresh start.



Tip 4: Schedule a Clean Sweep

Anyone can create an organizing system, but the real test is maintaining it. Whether you want to help your child keep his binder, backpack, homework area, or Launching Pad organized, you need to schedule regular maintenance sessions. Candice's, Kwon's, and Garrett's parents were amazed to find that having a pre-arranged weekly maintenance session, called Clean Sweep, kept their kids on top of organization.

In your family, you can easily remember these 20 minute sessions a couple of ways. One option is to purchase a family calendar. One of my favorites is Martha Stewart's Wall Manager decal calendar that can stick to the front of any refrigerator. On it, you can record important appointments, extracurricular activities, and of course the Clean Sweep. Many families find that Sunday evening is an ideal time to prepare for the week ahead. When this is clearly written on the calendar, you'll have less resistance as it becomes part of the family routine. Furthermore, if you crank up the music to your kids' favorite artist, you may find that they are more motivated and are in a better mood. Kids are usually willing to participate when they're having fun.

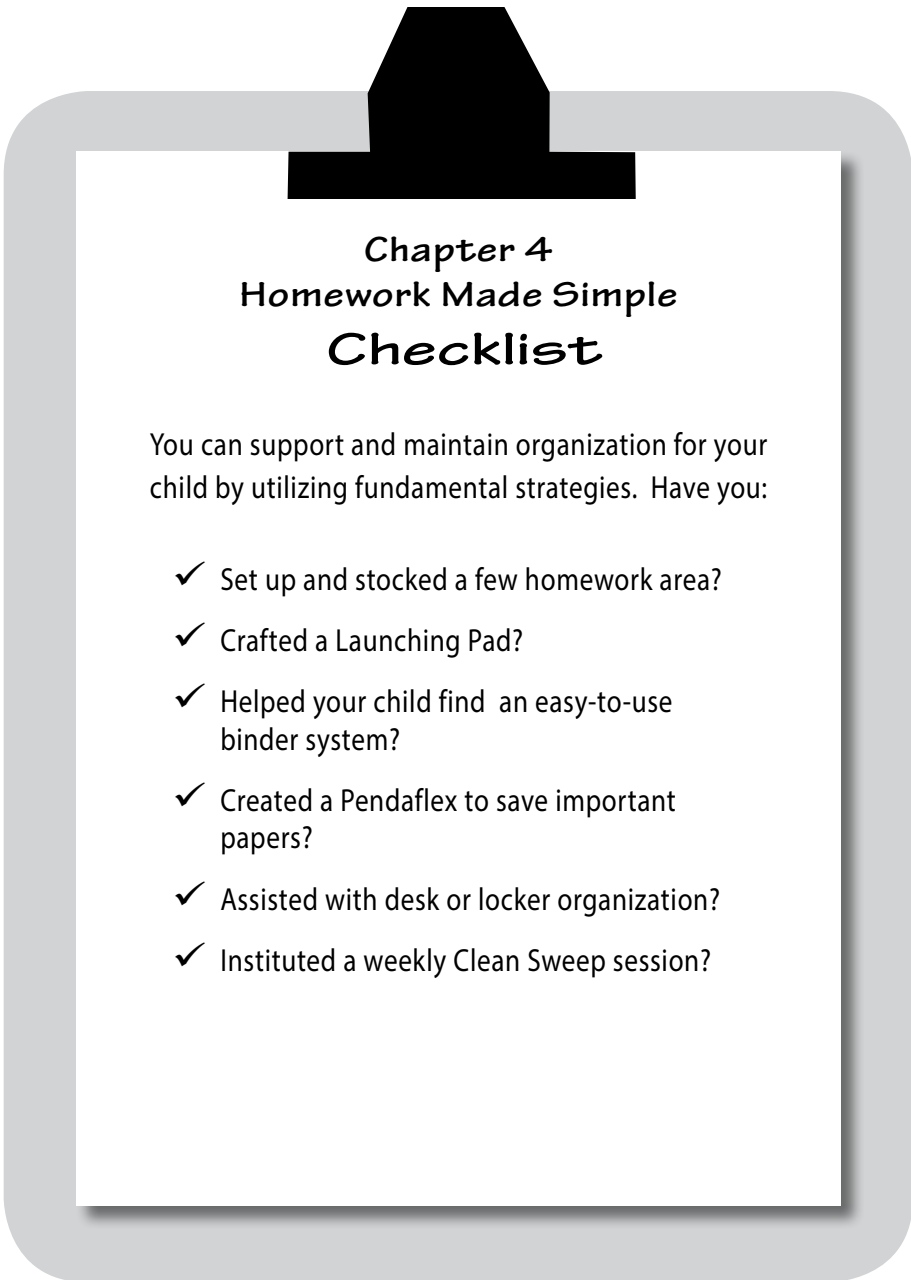
Another way to keep abreast of your maintenance meeting is to program the set time, say Sunday from 7 to 7:20 pm into your cell phone, tablet, or other device. Have your children do the same if they own a cell phone. Activate the alarm so that you receive a 15-minute warning that your maintenance meeting is just around the corner. During this maintenance session, your children will be responsible for organizing anything related to school. Don't assume when you say, "We're going to spend the next twenty minutes organizing," they will know what to do. Create and post a checklist of what needs to be accomplished. Your children's checklist might look like this:

Weekly Clean Sweep Checklist

- ✓ Organize your binder.
- ✓ Clean out your backpack.
- ✓ Restock school supplies (those at home and for school).
- ✓ Clear off your study area.
- ✓ Tidy the Launching Pad.

This is also a great time to model the skills you're teaching. Update the family calendar, sort through mail, or organize your work space. Make sure you're available to assist if necessary. Candice's parents found that the Clean Sweep also provided an opportunity for them to check in with their daughter about long-term assignments. They discussed the progress being made with projects, reports, and other large tasks.

As time goes on, your kids will require less work and time to sustain neatness, but don't stop this routine. Try meeting every other week if your child now has the tools to stay organized independently.



Chapter 4 Homework Made Simple Checklist

You can support and maintain organization for your child by utilizing fundamental strategies. Have you:

- ✓ Set up and stocked a few homework area?
- ✓ Crafted a Launching Pad?
- ✓ Helped your child find an easy-to-use binder system?
- ✓ Created a Pendaflex to save important papers?
- ✓ Assisted with desk or locker organization?
- ✓ Instituted a weekly Clean Sweep session?