



Back-to-school on the Right Foot!

Helping your child focus at school starts with organizing at home. Back-to-school is a great time to help children establish good habits that will last a lifetime. Let's break it down:

➤ Mornings and Evenings

- For breakfast to-go pack healthy foods (mini Triscuits, Frosted Mini-Wheats, diced fruit) in a snack bag to eat on the bus. For stress-free mornings, pack lunches, have papers signed and pack backpacks (with finished homework and signed papers) the night before.
- Designate one area for an easy exit (preferably where you go out the door) for backpacks, coats, and after school activities stuff (clothing, sports equipment, and/or instruments).
- Depending upon the age of the child, have clothing laid out so dressing is a breeze. Use the fabric shelving that hangs from the closet rod to place a full outfit for each day.
- Place the family calendar in a central location and review the next day's schedule each night. Post upcoming events for the family to see and look forward to.

➤ Bedroom

- Involve your child in organizing her room; what is working, what isn't working and integrate her suggestions.
- Divide the room into zones for different activities; use furniture as room dividers instead of 'lining the walls' with furniture.
- Go vertical wherever possible: hooks, single shelves, bookshelves, pockets on the back of doors and inside closets.
- Categorize and containerize; group "like" things together and everything needs a home.
- Use bed risers to boost the bed to store items underneath; but remember that out-of-sight, usually means out-of-mind.
- The less time she must spend opening a lid, using a hanger, or opening a drawer, the more chance it will stay that way; remember that less stuff means easier to organize.
- Too many choices and too much stuff is hard on children with special needs.

➤ Homework

- Location depends upon the age of the child, the amount of supervision she needs, and your space restrictions. The younger the child, the more supervision needed.
- The kitchen is a good place for parents to watch over children and help them; a child's room often has too many distractions to focus.
- Teenagers typically choose their bedrooms to do homework with or without a desk.
- Change the location for where homework is done if grades go up or down.

➤ Start Organizing and Uncluttering Early

- Unclutter after birthdays and holidays; it's an easier time for a child to let go of things.
- If you buy something new, get rid of something old; this teaches your child charitable giving.
- Allow your children to sell their belongings at yard sales or on eBay.
- Set a good example and keep your own spaces organized.
- Good habits started early will pay off into the college years and beyond so hang in there!

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