



Back-to-school on the Right Foot!

Back-to-school time is a challenging time, but helping children get organized can help you in the short run and assist them for a lifetime.

➤ Mornings and Evenings

- For stress-free mornings and time for breakfast: pack lunches the night before, have papers signed, and backpacks packed.
- Have a designated area for an easy exit (preferably where you actually go out the door) for backpacks (with homework and signed papers), 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 cinch. Use the fabric shelving that hangs from a rod in the closet that is typically used for sweaters. Kids could put an outfit, socks, and underwear in each bin with enough choices for the week so there's no hunting for items in the morning.
- Have a family calendar in a central location and review the next day's schedule. Use this area to post upcoming events.

➤ Child's Room

- Involve your child in organizing her room. Ask her what she likes and dislikes about her room and integrate as many of her suggestions to increase the chance the arrangement will work. Experiment with different choices to help her learn.
- Categorize and Containerize.
- Divide the room into zones for different activities so everything has a 'home'. Use furniture as room dividers instead of 'lining the walls' with furniture.
- Go vertical wherever possible: hooks, single shelves, book shelves, pockets on the backs of doors and inside closets.
- Use bed risers used by college students to boost the bed to store items underneath.
- The less time she has to spend opening a lid, using a hanger, or opening a drawer, the more chance it will stay that way.

➤ 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.
- The office works if a child's room has too many distractions in order to focus.
- Teenagers typically choose their bedrooms; some may or may not need a desk.
- You can always change the location if grades go up or down.

➤ Start Organizing When Children are Young

- Unclutter after birthdays and holidays. It's an easier time to let go of things.
- There's only so much room; if you buy something new, get rid of something old. Teach your child charitable giving.
- Allow your children to sell their belongings at yard sales or on eBay.
- Set a good example and organize your own spaces.

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