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Children's Occupational Therapy
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Organisation Skills

The following advice is to help develop the organisational skills needed to manage yourself and your belongings at home and school. Organisational skills are essential for developing independence and mean that we can plan for the day ahead, making sure we have the right equipment and get things done when we need to. It is important to learn how to become responsible for yourself and your belongings.

General strategies

- Tackle one area at a time, choose a task, set up a system and get that working before adding in another task.
- Discuss strategies with the child to work out what will work for them. Ensure that they are motivated to improve their organisational skills as this will make a big difference to success.
- Try not to take over, let the child have a go. If things go wrong, try to encourage the child to problem solve rather than giving them the answers straight away.
- Ensure the child understands the reason behind using each organisational strategies as this will help motivate them to use them.
- Do not give too many instructions at once, particularly if the instructions are only given verbally.
- You will likely need to explain tasks more than once in the beginning whilst they are learning.
- Allow extra time to practice any skills they are unfamiliar with.
- If a task involves following a sequence, this could be set out clearly on a wall chart or instruction sheet.
- Create a checklist for regular routines e.g. getting up in morning, packing school bag etc. and rather than prompting the child with what to do next, refer them to their checklist so that they develop some independence.
- Keep these lists somewhere in view e.g. fridge door or bedroom wall/door, on a mirror. When they have completed a task or an item from the checklist they can tick off the item so they know what to do next.
- Reward use of the checklists in order to encourage your child to refer to them and develop independence.
- Using a 'talk back' technique may be helpful, with the child repeating back the instruction saying:
 - What they are going to do.
 - What equipment they need.
 - Where they will work.
 - How they will do it.

- Keep practicing! This is the only way to improve and make new habits.

Organisation at Home

- Keep a family calendar. Track everyone's activities on a prominent and accessible calendar, encouraging your child to write their own entries and refer to the calendar when making plans. You also might consider checking schedules and updating the calendar as a family.
- Introduce checklists. Whether it's as simple as "3 things to do before bed" or "what to take to school" creating and referring to lists together will develop your child's organisational ability.
- Assign 'jobs' that involve sorting or categorising e.g. food shopping, emptying the dishwasher, cleaning out a cupboard and other tasks that involve pre-planning, making lists or arranging things.
- Keep bedrooms etc. clutter free and always put things away so that they can be found next time.
- Use containers and organisers. If there's a place for everything, it is easier to find items, keep things neat and tidy up. Build "pick up & put away" time into the daily routine. The child could put pictures or write labels to say what is in each container e.g. makeup, hair bobbles, stationary etc.
- Buy your child a planner. Choose one that appeals to your child so they will be keen to use it. Creating a schedule encourages time management and planning. Be sure to routinely co-ordinate the information with your family calendar to avoid conflicts.
- Cook together. Cooking teaches measuring, following directions, sorting ingredients, and managing time- all key elements in organisation. Involve your child in meal planning too, challenging them to help you put together a shopping list.
- Encourage an interest in collecting. This could be stickers, rocks, stamps, books anything that can be sorted, classified and arranged.
- Reward and provide support with organisational tasks. Your child may find organising a challenge, so help develop routines and give your child a treat for jobs well done!

Getting ready for school & packing a school bag

- A sturdy backpack with many compartments and pockets can really help with organisation. Try to find one with two to three large sections- one for books, one for notebooks and one for personal items. Any zipped pockets can hold smaller school supplies.
- Make sure your child does not carry items they don't need in their school bag as this can make finding items and staying organised more challenging.
- Allow a set time each day to organise specific tasks e.g. packing school bag, getting school uniform out. This is often best to do the night before to save time and avoid additional stress in the morning.
- Make sure a clear timetable of the school day is visible so packing the school bag is easier. Make it clear which days they need their PE kit to help remind them to take this with them.

- Use a visual chart close to where the child leaves their bag at home so that they can check whether they have packed everything they need. This could be put inside a luggage tag attached to the bag
- Use transparent pencil cases as this can make it easier to find items inside.
- If your child has a mobile phone, programme in a reminder to pack their school bag into their calendar.

Organisation in the classroom/at school

- Keep the whiteboard clutter free and use colour and space on whiteboards to differentiate sections to make information easier for students to find.
- Having access to a locker or designated space to store books and PE kit may be beneficial.
- Encourage child to use apps on their phone or tablet for setting up lists and reminders. Snooze reminders until the task is completed rather than just cancelling to make sure they remember to complete the task. Reminders can be set for end of lesson times or end of school day e.g. reminder at end of PE day to take PE kit home.
- Keep class materials in the same place and clearly labelled.
- Try to keep the classroom clutter free e.g. store materials in a cupboard etc.
- Encourage the child to keep their desk free from clutter and only have out items required for the current task.
- Encourage child to use a highlighter to emphasise the key facts, dates etc. and organise notes on the page.

School work and homework

- Use coloured pens or highlighters to help organise and prioritise work.
- Use a colour coded filing system for homework sheets/books. This can signify different subjects or what work needs to be done. This can be linked in with a timetable which can also be colour coded so that it is easy to see at a glance which subjects are happening each day.
- Write homework tasks on the board and allow the child to take a picture of this with their phone or tablet so that they can look this up later. Or check homework planner before they leave the class to ensure they have recorded it correctly.
- Establish a homework routine. Help your child make a "study" timetable and set up a comfortable workspace- whether in the bedroom, lounge or at the kitchen table.
- Create a homework supply box. Fill a box with office supplies and encourage your child to store pens, pencil sharpener, paper, measurement tools, and a calculator in it so they have on hand whatever is needed.
- Child to insert question marks next to any notes that are unclear and require more information from a classmate or teacher.
- Pair child up with a homework buddy that they can check homework with or negotiate a system to maintain communication between home and school so you can check with the teacher that homework has been handed in.
- Make a homework to-do list so the child can plan dates where this is due in and tick things off when completed.