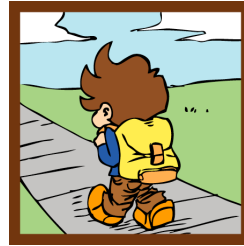


Organization



Organization is the ability to arrange elements and develop systematic strategies to reach an ultimate goal. There are two types of organization: *organization of self* and *organization of materials*. Organization of self refers to one's ability to complete tasks and is a core component of the skill of planning. Organization of refers to the ability to access the necessary materials when needed. Through organization, one can take a step-by-step approach that will assist in achieving one's goals. Organization may involve both short and long term goals and requires a person to take all aspects of a situation into account.

Home and School Situations Requiring Organization

- Recording and completing homework assignments
- Organizing one's backpack, desk, locker, and room
- Preparing and having needed items at school and sporting events
- Playing games at recess (picking players, establishing rules, setting up)
- Keeping track of and planning for events
- Completing tasks consisting of multiple steps
- Writing a paper
- Maintaining an email account
- Creating a play list on an iPod

Hints and Strategies to Improve Organization

- Teach by doing. Discuss plans for the day or verbalize the steps of completing a series of tasks, such as errands. Use calendars, sticky notes, and other visual reminders for yourself to model these organizational skills to your child. Display regular routines (such as putting your keys, wallet, and cell-phone in a certain spot everyday) for your child to observe.
- Purchase a journal or assignment book. Have your child write in it everything that needs to be completed (e.g. homework and upcoming tests), as well as scheduling activities. This will help organize schoolwork and make keeping track of events easier.
- Help your child to develop methods for organizing her bedroom. One helpful way of doing so is by taping drawings or digital pictures to dresser or desk drawers to designate where the items in each picture go. Encourage your child to initiate the organization by taking pictures of items that she groups together.
- Use predictable schedules and routines and prepare in advance for any changes that might occur. Place a big clock in your child's bedroom as a reminder to keep to a time-schedule. Provide a regular place to put backpacks at the conclusion of the school day and schedule regular times to clean and organize the backpack.
- Develop a plan and a description of what constitutes a clean room, by taking photographs of what a clean room looks like. Schedule a weekly time for your child to clean her room and have designated containers for toys and other belongings. Regularly reinforce your child for her efforts and provide an appropriate allowance or meaningful privileges for successful completion of household tasks.

- Encourage a hobby requiring organization, such as collecting "Pokemon" or baseball cards, rocks, shells, American Girl dolls, or stamps. Help your child find some type of "organizer" (a shelf, tackle box, or card "sleeves") to systematize her materials.
- Practice organization with digital technologies. Many older children and teenagers enjoy and frequently use digital technologies such as cell-phones and iPods. These technologies present many opportunities for organization that you can encourage your child to take advantage of. For example, helping your child to create a play list of favorite songs on an iPod or to rearrange applications on an iPod Touch in a logical manner are two opportunities that your child can use to practice organization. Cell-phones can also be fun for organizing telephone numbers or photographs of one's family and friends. The best way to assist your child in practicing these skills on her iPod or cell-phone is to practice these techniques with her initially and point out the benefits of using these types of organization.
- Practice organizational skills with computer and internet-based technologies. Encourage your child to use the many internet-based technologies available in order to practice organization skills. For example, Google Docs is a great tool for word processing and later organizing documents by file type. Similarly, Picasa, a free Google application that can be used for organizing pictures, or applications such as Photbucket or Flickr, also provide your child with the opportunity to practice organization skills in a fun manner.
- Ask your child to select one area of her life in which she wishes to improve her organization. By doing this, you involve your child in setting a more specific goal for herself rather than simply "getting organized." For example, a child who struggles to find her athletic equipment every time she has practice might want to come up with a simple solution for this problem, such as placing an over-sized, open-topped container in a common space in which all of her sporting equipment can go into. This might be best done in a garage or mudroom in the home where your child will notice it, but it is not in the way of the rest of the household. Other areas that children might choose to focus their organization might be to keep better track of their homework, to have a special and consistent place to keep their iPod or cell-phone, or to identify and maintain a location for special toys (such as Legos, dolls, or smaller hand-held video games).

Books on Organization

Cooper-Kahn, Joyce, Ph.D. and Laurie C. Dietzel. (2008). *Late, Lost, and Unprepared: A Parents' Guide to Helping Children with Executive Functioning*. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House. [Chapter 15]

Cox, Adam J., Ph.D. (2007). *No Mind Left Behind: Understanding and Fostering Executive Control--The Eight Essential Brain Skills Every Child Needs to Thrive*. New York, NY: Penguin Books. [Chapter 6]

Dawson, Peg, Ed.D. and Richard Guare, Ph.D. (2009). *Smart but Scattered*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press. [Chapter 17]

Goldberg, Donna. (2005). *The Organized Student*. New York, NY: Fireside.

Morgenstern, Julie and Jesse Morgenstern-Colon. (2002). *Organizing from the Inside Out for Teenagers: The Foolproof System for Organizing Your Room, Your Time, and Your Life*. New York, NY: Henry Holt, 2002.

Moss, Samantha, and Lesley Schwartz. (2007). *Where's My Stuff: The Ultimate Teen Organizing Guide*. San Francisco, CA: Zest Books.

Richard, Gail J. and Jill K. Fahy. (2005). *The Source for Development of Executive Functions*. East Moline, IL: Lingua Systems.

Websites and Articles on Organization

LearningWorks For Kids (<http://www.learningworksforkids.com/EF/organization.html>): The premier resource for executive function information, offering a detailed explanation of organization, tips for parents, and activities to improve this skill.

Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities (<http://www.ldonline.org/article/108>): A list of general tips to help children improve their daily organizational skills.

Scholastic (<http://www.scholastic.com/kids/homework/organizer.htm>): An interactive site on organization which offers tips from other students, a to-do list maker, a priority ranking tool, and dozens of other organization-related tools and tips.

National Association for Gifted Children (<http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=968>): This site focuses on academic organization and provides a list of links to other valuable organization-building sites.

Games and Activities That Can Practice Organization

- Collections (e.g. stickers, shells, rocks, baseball cards) - When your child has a collection of something, it offers her the opportunity to practice categorizing and organizing these materials.
- World of Warcraft - Massive multiplayer online games (MMOG), such as World of Warcraft, require players to be organized by collecting and acquiring various items in order to be successful in future levels.
- Puzzles - Puzzles allow your child to break down the larger task into smaller ones, such as focusing on a corner or part of the puzzle, and grouping together pieces with similar colors or pictures.
- Play Kitchens/Play Tool Workshops - The use of play kitchens or workshops offers your child a place to practice her bedroom organization skills on a smaller scale.
- Monopoly (when your child is given responsibility to be the banker) - Giving your child an important responsibility in a board game, such as the banker, will help her to recognize the importance of organization since the game cannot proceed without his role.
- Helping to put away groceries in their appropriate places, unloading the dishwasher, or putting away laundry - These household chores offer your child the opportunity to practice developing methods to do chores, categorize items, and break larger tasks into smaller ones.
- Solitaire - This popular game, available on most computers, allows your child to identify patterns and follow a method in order to succeed.
- Sim Computer Games (SimTower, SimCity, Sims) - The different Sim computer games require your child to use a variety of organization skills, such as managing money and keeping track of materials, in order to successfully build and maintain the desired tower, city, or person.