

Getting Your Children Organized

- Label things clearly and be sure there is enough room to store their toys and clothes. Use pictures and /or words on drawer fronts, shelves, and bins. Only cover bins that will be stored away. Children are more likely to put things away if they don't have to pull something out, remove a lid, place toy inside, replace lid, and reposition container. Place most used toys at chest or eye level, less used toys near the floor. Rotate toys often!
- Give each child their own bulletin board for them to post all their special papers, picture, awards, and calendar.
- Make sure each child has their own study center equipped with all the tools (pencils, papers, markers, stapler, ruler, tape, etc.) and enough task lighting. Small plastic drawer units or baskets on desk top or in drawers serve as good storage and keeping things organized.
- Give your children age-appropriate chores to do daily. Always rotate children's chores and responsibilities. Have a timer handy and a small list of 3 or 4 chores each child does each day. For children who have trouble staying on task, set a timer and be sure they mark off each chore when completed. Be sure they do their chores in the same order every day to help with consistency.
- Create a place where each child can place backpacks and school things every time they come home from school. You can use baskets, bins or shelves that are either color coded or have their names on them. During cold months, they can also store their hats and gloves.
- Keep their socks sorted by pinning them together with a safety pin or clipping them together with clips. Get a different colored marker for each child and make a dot on the outside of each pair of socks. For newer socks, use two dots. This helps them distinguish between left and right.
- Keep all children's art supplies in one place. Offer a variety of items for them to choose from such as stamps, paints, pastels, markers, scissors, glue, glitter, macaroni pieces, and small containers to sort them in, etc. To keep children (and floors and fabrics) safe, keep these things out of their reach until they are old enough to be responsible to put everything away that they get out.
- When children bring artwork home, choose the ones you like the best and set them aside somewhere safe. The others can serve as placemats, wrapping paper, and cut into cards. The chosen ones can be framed and hung around the home. Rotate the artwork according to the seasons. They can also be given as gifts.
- Be sure there is enough room in your child's closet and dresser for storage of clothes. Make sure the hangers can slide from side to side for clear viewing and choosing. Keep like things together in closet and in drawers.
- Create a family calendar and look at it together each weekend. This family event helps everyone plan activities and offers opportunity for older siblings to help remind younger ones of their tasks, responsibilities, and upcoming events. Everyone should play a role in adding events to the calendar and letting all family members know of new additions/subtractions.
- Have a "rainy day" box filled with various inside activities, games, puzzles, dress-up clothes, tea party items, or favorite family books so children never have an opportunity to tell you they are bored and have nothing to do.
- When it comes time to travel, have each child fill a (non-school) backpack with special trip items (papers, crayons, coloring books, deck of cards or flash cards). Each child is responsible to keeping and using their own items, then returning them to the backpack.
- With each season comes a time to clean out children's rooms to make room for new items. Give children the opportunity to give new, never used toys to disadvantaged children (Angel Tree at Christmas for example). Broken things need to be thrown away and clothes that are too small or worn should be handed down or given away to charities or tossed if soiled or torn.
- Before entering into a new transition (getting ready for dinner, bed, and outing) use a timer and set it to go off 15 minutes earlier than the desired time for the transition. Let it be the "bad guy" to let the child know they have only a short time left to clean up or get ready.