

## **Organisation and Time Management Strategies for Children**

There seem to be so many demands on everyone's time and energy these days. You're busy, and so are your kids. Unfortunately, children aren't born knowing how to manage time and organise their stuff. In particular, children with short term auditory/working memory difficulties will have an even harder time learning how to get and stay organised and meet deadlines. We can help them though, by teaching them strategies that make staying organised easier and by setting a good example.

### **Start Small**

No matter how frazzled you and your child feel, avoid the temptation to revamp everything at once; it's just too overwhelming. Instead, talk to your child about what he thinks he should tackle first.

- Ask him what he/she feels is his biggest problem area. Getting ready for school on time? Bringing home everything he needs for homework? Keeping his room clean? Completing his homework and turning it in?
- Examine your own opportunities for improvement. Your child can probably point out a few, such as frequently misplaced keys or last minute essential shopping.
- Brainstorm possible solutions for both of you. Keep solutions simple for the greatest likelihood of success.
- Agree on strategies, and make a list of any supplies you need to make them work.

Once you've got a plan, try it out for a week or two. Enlist your child to give you reminders for your new system, and he'll be more receptive to your reminders to him. After the trial period, review how things are working and make adjustments as necessary.

Here are some strategies to help with common problems. Work out which ones work for you and your child.

### **General Time Management**

- Sit down with your child to examine how he spends his time. Include school, sleep, meals, sports practice, homework time, social activities, religious study, etc. Color in a pie chart or use an hour-by-hour day planner for a visual representation of a typical day.
- Use the chart to identify bottlenecks or over scheduling. To resolve issues, look for chances to reschedule activities at another time or cut them out altogether.

- Raise time awareness by pointing out conflicts as they occur. "There's time to either go to the birthday party or to visit Grandpa." Let him make the choice when it doesn't involve a "must do."
- Post a family calendar in an accessible place for everyone. Use it to track family commitments and your child's classroom assignments and other activities.

### **Weekly Planning**

- Set aside time each Sunday evening to plan the upcoming week with your child.
- Make a "to do" list noting when school tasks and household chores must be finished. Crossing off completed items gives your child a sense of accomplishment.
- Make sure the family calendar is up-to-date.

### **The Morning Routine**

- Prepare the night before. Choose clothing, gather books and assignments, and put everything in a specific place.
- Set the alarm clock early enough to provide necessary time to get ready.
- Make a list or picture chart of the tasks in your child's morning routine, such as brushing teeth, eating breakfast, and getting dressed. Have him mark each task as it's completed.
- Post a list or pictures of everything your child should have as he walks out the door: backpack, jacket, lunch, etc.
- Use specific verbal reminders. Instead of asking, "Do you have everything?" ask "Do you have your science book?"

### **Organisation for School**

- Get a sturdy three-ring folder with colored pocket dividers for each subject. Coach your child to slip all assignments into the proper section, and check regularly to see that it's being done.
- Include a pocket labeled "Home" for anything that needs your attention.
- Provide a calendar or assignment page for noting homework, tests, projects, etc. Transfer this information to the family calendar.
- Enlist his teacher's help, if needed, to ensure assignments are entered in the folder consistently and correctly.
- Help your child maintain his folder by going through the papers with him, putting things in order, and discarding unneeded items.

## **Structure for His Room**

- Survey your child's room from his perspective. Talk to him about the space and storage needs for his various supplies, activities, and treasures.
- Organise for each activity: e.g., getting dressed requires a basket for dirty clothes, hanging rails he can reach, and drawers with enough space to stow things neatly.
- Use creative storage solutions. Try a door-hung shoe holder for action figures, games, or trading cards. Clay pots or tin cans can be decorated and neatly hold markers, crayons, or paint brushes.
- When the room is neat and organised, take photographs of how it looks. Place them in a spot where your child can check frequently to see if his room still matches the pictures.
- Sort through his stuff on a regular basis. Work together to choose outgrown clothes and toys to be discarded or donated.

## **Practice Makes Perfect**

New habits take time to learn, especially if bad habits need to be unlearned. Don't give up. Your child will need frequent reminders, lots of help, and consistency. Don't hesitate to pitch in; he can benefit from watching you put things in good order. Remember to reward his successes and give him a little extra help when he's feeling discouraged. The strategies you teach him now

**Reference: Nancy Firchow, M.L.S**