

# **BECOMING AN ORGANIZED STUDENT**

**ISBN-13: 978-1-55548-597-9**  
**ISBN: 1-55548-597-9**

# BECOMING AN ORGANIZED STUDENT

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# BECOMING AN ORGANIZED STUDENT

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The transition from elementary school to middle school is a defining moment in the lives of young students. The incredible gap between the level of responsibility required of an elementary school student and that of a middle school student can seem insurmountable to many kids. As a result, students become overwhelmed and their performance suffers. Further, even students who fare well in middle school may find themselves barely keeping their heads above water in high school and college. Students who don't develop good study habits early may never catch up to their more organized peers.

In middle school, students are rarely given adequate time to situate themselves in their new surroundings before the work starts to become overwhelming. As such, kids need to learn how to tackle their new responsibilities right away, before they get too far behind and become discouraged. Many a promising student can become lost in a mire of disorganization and very few can escape without help.

The key to surviving—and succeeding in middle school—is staying organized. A truly organized student has his or her papers in the right place, knows how to budget time properly, and has goals that are clear and reachable. Students who learn to do this will perform better and feel good about themselves as well.

Being organized makes school more enjoyable. While many kids may assume that being disorganized is less stressful, they soon find that their methods actually leave them completely stressed out and hating school. On the other hand, students who are organized and enjoy school will be more motivated to work hard both in class and at home. Ultimately, students who go into school with confidence will learn more than those who view their lessons and homework as a chore.

*Becoming an Organized Student* teaches students that being organized actually reduces the amount of time spent on schoolwork as well as the stress that goes along with it. Viewers will learn through the examples of other students whose disorganized ways led them to disaster. Then they will see these same students correcting their mistakes and succeeding—both in terms of grades and also in terms of personal satisfaction. By following the lessons of this program and the Teacher's Resource Book, your students will pave the way for both short- and long-term success.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After watching *Becoming an Organized Student* and participating in the class activities included in this Teacher's Resource Book, your students will be able to:

- identify their problem areas in organization
- keep a clean locker, backpack and study area
- use an assignment pad, daily planner, and wall calendar effectively
- better understand how they spend their time and learn to prioritize their work
- avoid procrastination
- develop a routine for studying
- recognize things that distract them during homework time and take steps to eliminate those distractions
- work with family members to develop a schedule for homework, chores and other activities
- learn to set short-term goals for homework and long-term goals for academic success
- develop strategies for staying focused and paying attention

The program opens with a series of horror movie spoofs in which the video's hosts experience terrifying problems related to their lack of organization. First, Madison can't find her science project and gets an F because her locker is a mess. Next, Paul is late for basketball practice and is forced to do 500 push-ups. Then, Laura is scribbling at her homework as the bus pulls up but doesn't get it done in time. Finally, Ethan is shocked when he realizes that he has forgotten to study for a big test.

Next, the four hosts gather to talk about their experiences. Ethan remarks that middle school is pretty scary in general and that disorganization just makes it worse. Paul points out that he had no idea what to do because everything was so different from elementary school. Laura says that she has the same problem. Madison then explains that while she had some rough times at first, getting organized has helped her immensely. The four all admit that they've learned from their mistakes and encourage the audience to do so as well. The hosts give viewers a quick quiz—a series of questions about losing or forgetting things. If viewers have answered yes to two or more of the questions, the hosts say, they could probably use some help.

At this point, the lessons begin. Madison and Laura stand in front of Madison's locker. Laura is showing Madison her science project, but when Madison tries to locate her own project, she is unable to. She scrambles through her backpack and locker which are both full of loose papers and other random stuff. Eventually, Laura informs Madison that the bell is about to ring and Madison is forced to abandon her search. In a later class, we learn that Madison will lose twenty points on her project for handing it in late. To make matters worse, she cannot find her homework or textbook for her next class, despite more frantic searching through her messy backpack. Then, at lunch time, Madison is unable to buy pizza because she left her money on her desk at home. As a cafeteria worker snatches the tray away from her, the scene pauses and Madison steps out of it, addressing the audience.

She takes us through a brief summary of her day, highlighting where she went wrong. She explains that her major problem was her messy backpack and locker, but that she was really bummed when she couldn't buy pizza. After the review, she starts to explain how she got herself organized. She narrates out of the scene as the actions go on behind her. She says that first she got a separate notebook and folder of matching color for each of her classes and covered her textbooks in paper of the same color. Then, she cleaned out her locker and organized it by putting books, notebooks and her lunch on different shelves. Finally, she got in the habit of cleaning her backpack and putting everything in it the night before school so that she wouldn't have to rush around in the morning. After her explanation, we see how her day would have played out if she had been organized. This time, she finds her project easily and has her matching purple homework folder and textbook ready for math class.

Paul then takes over the narration, showing us his day of poor organization. It begins with Paul frantically explaining to his mother that he has band practice in the morning and an exasperated mom rushing him to school in her pajamas. Then, in English class, he is called on to present his book report which he did not think was due until Monday. Finally, he arrives at basketball practice 45 minutes late because he forgot he had it. As punishment, he is benched in the next day's game. As the coach doles out his punishment, the scene pauses and Paul steps out in the same manner that Madison did earlier. He too takes us through an abridged version of his day before explaining how he was able to get on top of things.

He explains that first he got a weekly planner and a calendar so that he could write things down and not forget them. We see him writing down his various commitments in his daily planner and he informs us that he does this at the start of every week so that he doesn't ever get dates and times confused. He goes on to say that he also got a whiteboard where he writes down important things that his family needs to know about. We see him warning his mom about his A.M. band practice and writing it on the board. To top things off, he explains how he uses a wall calendar to remember things that are more long-term like his history project for next Thursday. With his explanation finished, we watch him go through his day in an organized fashion. It begins with his mom ready to drive him to practice, thanking him for the reminder. Next, his book report goes off without a hitch. Finally, he is on time for practice and the coach compliments him on his play.

Laura takes over and we find her at her extremely messy desk. She is rummaging through piles of stuff and only finds what she is looking for after 15 minutes have passed. Then, she has to search anew for her health textbook. With some help from her sister, she eventually remembers leaving it in her locker. This causes her great distress because she has a project due the next day that she had not even started. As she reaches the height of her frustration, the scene pauses and she steps out to narrate. She takes us through what just happened, explaining how her disorganization and procrastination left her high and dry. After the review, she explains the tricks that her sister taught her for staying organized.

According to Laura, the first step was getting an assignment pad. This keeps her from forgetting assignments as well as leaving important materials at school. The next step was cleaning off her desk. Once it was clean, she stocked it with pens and pencils and other school supplies. She also started a routine of studying 45 minutes every night at the same time. Her final step was tackling her problem of procrastination. She was able to overcome this obstacle by breaking down large, week-long projects into daily assignments. The key to this strategy was saving the easiest part of the assignment for the last night. With her explanation finished, we watch how her evening would have taken place if she had been organized. This time, she finds her materials easily and only has to make a cover sheet for her project. Her sister asks if she can go to the movies and Laura says that she can go in 45 minutes when she finishes her math sheet.

Ethan takes the reins and reminds us of what the other three hosts have learned. He then says that what he learned was how to ace a test. His story of disorganization begins late at night playing video games in his room. He doesn't go to bed until 1:45. The next morning, he is exhausted and has no time to eat breakfast. Then at school, the teacher passes out a test that Ethan has completely forgotten about. As he panics, the scene pauses and he steps out to narrate. He takes us back through his day, pointing out where he went wrong. He says that his mistakes were staying up late, not eating breakfast and not being prepared for the test.

Following his explanation, he shows us how he was able to correct all of these problems. First, he learned to always write down the day of a big test as soon as it was assigned. Next, he started checking over his assignments for the week every Sunday night so that nothing he may have forgotten about would sneak up on him. Another strategy he learned was to ask his teacher for a study guide, or make his own before big tests. With the material organized, he was able to break it down into nightly sessions rather than one night of cramming. Once he has told us all of his methods, he shows us how his day should have gone. The night before the test he goes to bed early. When he wakes up in the morning he is refreshed and has time to eat a good breakfast. Then, at school, he is confident and ready to take on the test.

With all of their stories told, the four hosts gather to review what they and the audience have learned. Madison reminds us about getting a separate notebook and folder for each class, keeping a clean locker, and packing an organized backpack the night before school. Paul reiterates the importance of a weekly planner, calendar and whiteboard for staying on top of projects and extra-curricular activities. Laura then explains her system of using an assignment pad, keeping a clean study area, and breaking down projects into smaller bits. Finally, Ethan takes us back through the steps towards acing a test, reminding us to keep track of the test date, make a study guide, and study a little bit each night. After the review, Paul tells the audience to take a look back at the quiz from the beginning of the program, asking if we can think of any ways to improve. Madison tells us not to give up even if we're overwhelmed, and Ethan asks what we are waiting for.

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# STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Pre/Post Test

Decide whether the following statements are true or false.

1. TRUE or FALSE: It's a good idea to tackle an entire project the night before it is due because it forces you to work under pressure and sharpens your thinking. \_\_\_\_\_
2. TRUE or FALSE: It is important for your parents to be as aware of your schedule and activities as you are. \_\_\_\_\_
3. TRUE or FALSE: Extra-curricular activities will only get in the way of homework and should be avoided. \_\_\_\_\_
4. TRUE or FALSE: An assignment book is an excellent place to make a list of all the homework you need to do. \_\_\_\_\_
5. TRUE or FALSE: Color-coding folders and textbooks is a waste of time. \_\_\_\_\_
6. TRUE or FALSE: A messy locker, desk or backpack is an obstacle to success in school. \_\_\_\_\_
7. TRUE or FALSE: When you have a large project to do, it's best to break it down into daily assignments. \_\_\_\_\_
8. TRUE or FALSE: Always do the easiest part of a large assignment the first night. \_\_\_\_\_
9. TRUE or FALSE: When you study for an important exam, it helps to ask your teacher for a study guide, or make your own. \_\_\_\_\_
10. TRUE or FALSE: The night before a big test, try to get extra sleep. \_\_\_\_\_

*The Answer Key appears on the next page.*

## Answer Key

1. TRUE or FALSE: It's a good idea to tackle an entire project the night before it is due because it forces you to work under pressure and sharpens your thinking. *FALSE. Saving a large project until the last minute will only stress you out, cause you to rush and prevent you from enjoying other fun things that day.*
2. TRUE or FALSE: It is important for your parents to be as aware of your schedule and activities as you are. *TRUE. If you'll be relying on your parents for transportation, it's extremely important that they know in advance where and when your activities are going to take place.*
3. TRUE or FALSE: Extra-curricular activities will only get in the way of homework and should be avoided. *FALSE. If you're organized, you should have enough time for homework, activities and relaxation.*
4. TRUE or FALSE: An assignment book is an excellent place to make a list of all the homework you need to do. *TRUE. An assignment book helps you keep track of all the things you need to do.*
5. TRUE or FALSE: Color-coding folders and textbooks is a waste of time. *FALSE. Color-coding is an effective tool in making sure that you always have the materials you need and can find them easily.*
6. TRUE or FALSE: A messy locker, desk or backpack is an obstacle to success in school. *TRUE. A messy workspace makes it more difficult to concentrate, be efficient or find the items you need quickly.*
7. TRUE or FALSE: When you have a large project to do, it's best to break it down into daily assignments. *TRUE.*
8. TRUE or FALSE: Always do the easiest part of a large assignment the first night. *FALSE. You should save the easiest part of your assignment for the last night. Make sure you do all the hard stuff first.*
9. TRUE or FALSE: When you study for an important exam, it helps to ask your teacher for a study guide, or make your own. *TRUE. By practicing for a test ahead of time, you will be more comfortable.*
10. TRUE or FALSE: The night before a big test, try to get extra sleep. *TRUE. It's important to be refreshed (and make time for breakfast) before a test, so you can do your best.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Here's your chance to make a schedule that will help you better organize your time. Use a separate sheet of paper for this activity.

**STEP ONE:** Make a list of all your commitments and activities for the coming week. Be sure to include any school projects, social events, sports competitions and so on.

**STEP TWO:** Once you have created your list of commitments, it's time to formulate a schedule for each day. But before you begin scheduling, consider the following questions:

- Which of your commitments have the highest priority?
- Which of your commitments are inflexible in terms of when you can get them done? Which commitments can be scheduled more loosely—on a do-it-when-I-can basis?
- How much sleep do you need to get each night? Don't forget to include time for sleep on your schedule.
- Are you ready for unforeseen commitments? You should leave some open time on your schedule for things that might pop up at the last minute.

**STEP THREE:** Once you have created your schedule, it's time to test how well it will work. Read the following situations and decide how you would respond to each one. Remember, it's not the end of the world if you can't fit these unforeseen events into your schedule. Sometimes we need to make choices about what we have time for and school should almost always come first.

Your best friend just got a new video game for his birthday. Do you have time to go over to his house and play? If so, when?

\_\_\_\_\_

Your neighbor asks you if you can babysit his kids on Wednesday night. Can you fit this into your schedule?

\_\_\_\_\_

Your parents surprise the family with a new puppy. How will this affect your schedule? Can you find time to walk it, play with it and train it?

\_\_\_\_\_

On Tuesday, your math teacher assigns an optional extra-credit project. You could really use the bonus points, but it looks like it might take three to four hours of work to get it done. Do you have time? If so, when?

\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT'S WRONG WITH  
THIS PICTURE?**

Read the following scenarios about Jack, a student in desperate need of organization. Write down all of the problems you find. When you are finished, look at the answers on the next page and see how many problems you correctly identified.

### Scenario One:

Jack has set up a study area upstairs in his bedroom. He has a long desk with a computer on one end, and a TV with an Xbox® on the other end. The desk is littered with papers, potato chip bags, gum wrappers and more. He has a small reading lamp by his bed and a standing lamp in the far corner of the room. On the walls above his desk are posters of his favorite athletes and musicians, and similar posters cover the rest of his walls as well. Atop his nightstand is a boom box. Jack's pens, pencils and calculator are all stuffed into the nightstand.

What's wrong with this picture?

### Scenario Two:

Jack's backpack is green. His initials are stitched on the back. Inside the main compartment are all of his textbooks, each protected by a brown paper bag bookcover. Also in that compartment are the various handouts he has received this week, as well as his spiral notebook where he takes all of his notes. His calculator rests at the bottom of these papers. In the other pouch he has his lunch bag and several loose pens and pencils.

What's wrong with this picture?

*The Answer Key for this activity appears on the next page.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT'S WRONG WITH  
THIS PICTURE?

## Answer Key

Did you notice all of these details? Take a look and see how well you paid attention!

### Scenario One:

1. The television and Xbox® game console are too close to Jack's study area, providing tempting distractions from studying.
2. Jack's study area is messy and that makes it harder to be organized.
3. There is not enough lighting for Jack to read at his desk.
4. Jack has no whiteboard or wall calendar, just distracting posters.
5. There is no alarm clock in the room.
6. Jack's study items (pencils, pens, calculators) are too far from his study area.

### Scenario Two:

1. Jack is not using his locker to store any textbooks.
2. All of Jack's textbooks are the same color, which makes it harder to find the one he needs.
3. Jack doesn't have his papers in folders. This makes it more difficult for him to find his papers easily.
4. He is using only one spiral notebook for all of his classes, instead of using different notebooks for different subjects.
5. His calculator is not safely stored, and his pens and pencils are loose.

BONUS: Jack does not have an assignment pad.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**SETTING HOMEWORK GOALS**

Homework is one of the major sources of stress for most students, but it doesn't have to be. Having specific guidelines can help you stay on track. Complete this activity—if possible work on it with a parent or with an adult who is involved in helping you with school work.

1. I will remember my assignments by using:

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**Think about this:** Is an assignment pad a sufficient reminder? Are there people who can help you stay on top of things? Would a daily planner be useful?

2. I will start my homework each day by \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock.

**Think about this:** Do you work better if you start right after school? Or do you work better if you relax a bit beforehand? At what time are you too tired to study? What other commitments do you need to plan around?

3. I will finish my homework each day by \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock.

**Think about this:** How much time does it usually take to do your homework? What things might interfere and make it take longer? Can you change anything to avoid these interferences?

4. If I have trouble finishing on time, I will:

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**Think about this:** Who can you ask for help if you're stumped? What websites might help? Are there any friends you can call? Which teachers can you talk to about homework problems?

*This activity is continued on the next page.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

5. If some of my schoolwork is not finished by the end of the week I will:

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**Think about this:** What is the best time of the weekend for you to study? Do you like to be finished by Friday afternoon? Or do you like to wait until later? How long can you afford to wait? What other activities do you have on weekends?

6. At home, I will do my homework and studying in:

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**Think about this:** Which part of your house is quietest? Which part has the least distractions? Which part has the best workspace—a well-lit area with a desk or table?

7. I will cut down on distractions by:

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**Think about this:** What things are most likely to distract you? How can you make these things less distracting?

8. When I finish my homework I will reward myself with

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**Think about this:** What would help motivate you to get your work done on time? Would you like a small reward every day? Or would you prefer something larger once a week?



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**A CHECKPOINT CHECKLIST**

Becoming an organized student isn't as easy as simply cleaning off your desk and making a schedule. You really have to keep at it. It's important to have a few checkpoints throughout the day or week. Think of them as road signs to steer you in the right direction. You need to make sure that you're staying on top of your organization as well as your schoolwork.

Listed below are several aspects of being organized. Make a checklist for each and decide how often you need to check to make sure you're prepared. An example is provided. There are also two blank areas—use those to make checklists for other areas where you need to be more organized.

*Example:*

**A Clean Desk:**

To be checked: twice a week

1. No trash (food wrappers, dried-up pens, etc.)
2. No loose papers
3. An ample supply of pens/pencils
4. Wall calendar marked with important dates
5. Notebook paper in a neat pile

**A Clean Locker:**

To be checked: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**A Clean Backpack:**

To be checked: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

*This activity is continued on the next page.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

An Effective Assignment Pad:

To be checked: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

A Personal Organizer:

To be checked: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

To be checked: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

To be checked: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Joe is an advice columnist for students. He specializes in giving tips on how to be well-organized. But lately E-Joe hasn't been following his own advice, so he's late in answering these letters. Using what you've learned so far, see if you can help E-Joe and these kids get back on schedule. Use additional paper if you need more space.

Dear E-Joe,

I really enjoy school, but lately I haven't been able to stay awake in class or pay attention during tests. I always seem to drift off. I don't know what's wrong because I'm always in bed before 2 a.m. and I get up as late as I can (I throw some clothes on and run for the bus). I think that having basketball practice after school every day is wearing me out, so I'm going to have to quit unless you have a better idea. I love playing basketball, but if I do badly in school they'll kick me off the team anyway. Please help!

—Sleepy in Seattle

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Dear E-Joe,

I've been forgetful for as long as I can remember. Luckily, my parents have always been there to keep track of everything I need to do. However, my mom says now that I'm older, it's time for me to start handling my own business. Plus, she has a new job that keeps her really busy so she can't help me even if she wanted to. What am I going to do? How am I supposed to keep track of my homework, my after-school activities, and my babysitting job all by myself?

—Lone Wolf

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear E-Joe,

I always seem to lose my most important handouts and assignments. I don't know why this is happening! I always put every piece of paper I get into my backpack right away. Sometimes, I'll lose something for a week, but then I'll find it in my backpack when it's too late. Other times, my papers will be so crumpled up that I can barely read them, even though I always put them in nice and neat. What am I doing wrong?

—Black Hole Backpack

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Dear E-Joe,

I am so busy that it took me two weeks to find the time to write to you. Every morning I wake up, eat a quick breakfast, and go to school. After school I have soccer practice. There's more after practice—on Monday it's ballet, on Tuesday piano, Wednesday is...well you get the idea. When I finally get home, it's time for dinner. Then I go straight upstairs and try to get my homework done before I pass out from being so exhausted. Even on the weekends I'm busy. Half the time I'm doing chores or working odd jobs for my neighbors (babysitting, lawn cutting, etc.) and the rest of the time I try to hang out with my friends. They always have some big activity planned like bowling or rollerblading. The worst part is, sometimes I have to be in two or three places at once! I need your advice! I have to run now though, my mom needs me to do the dishes.

—Busy Bee

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

It's not always easy to keep track of everything you have to do all by yourself. Sometimes it helps to have a friend to remind you in case you fall behind. For this exercise, pick a buddy who you can call every day—you'll remind your buddy of his or her assignments as well as find out anything that you forgot to write down.

With your buddy, complete the activities below.

### Team Name

Pick a team name for your buddy system. Make it memorable so that you remember to call each other every day.

### Timing

What time should you call your buddy? Decide what will be the best time to call. Remember, if it's too early then your buddy might forget again after your call. And if it's too late there might not be enough time to make up forgotten work.

### The Usual Suspects

What subjects or activities are you most likely to forget? Make sure your buddy knows where your weak spots are, so he or she can help you where you need it most.

### Study Sessions

Your buddy doesn't have to turn into a walking, talking assignment pad. The two of you can also get together to study before big tests. Schedule a day this week when you will get together and review important information.

### Good Clean Fun

Cleaning up doesn't always have to be a chore. Decide how you and your buddy can make cleaning out your lockers, backpacks and desks into a fun game.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer each question truthfully. Circle either Yes or No. You will not be graded. This assessment is a personal tool to help you determine where you need to concentrate your efforts.

1.	Do you find yourself putting off homework until it's too late or you're too tired?	YES	NO
2.	Do you miss deadlines because you wait too long to start?	YES	NO
3.	Do you ever do your homework at school on the day that it is due because you didn't complete it the night before?	YES	NO
4.	Do you spend more time dreading homework than doing it?	YES	NO

Answering "Yes" to the questions above means you may be a procrastinator. There is no quick-fix cure for procrastination. You simply need to set goals and work hard to reach them.

5.	Do you study in a place that is noisy, crowded, cramped or messy?	YES	NO
6.	Do you get distracted by outside things like magazines, television, music or the internet?	YES	NO
7.	Do you daydream, doodle or just drift off while trying to do homework?	YES	NO
8.	Does homework make you feel tired, even when you've had plenty of sleep?	YES	NO

Answering "Yes" to the questions above means you may be easily distracted. Read the fact sheet called *A Good Study Space*.

*This activity is continued on the next page.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Do you ever miss practices, club meetings, etc. because you simply forgot to go?	YES NO
10. Do you ever find yourself accidentally scheduling two things for the same time?	YES NO
11. Do you ever feel like you are spread too thin activity-wise?	YES NO
12. Do you ever miss out on fun opportunities because you have put things off until the last minute?	YES NO

Answering “Yes” to the questions above means you need to work on your scheduling. A personal organizer would be a good idea.

13. Do you ever leave important study materials at school?	YES NO
14. Do you ever forget about worksheets and other assignments?	YES NO
15. Do you find yourself calling friends to find out about what chapters to read or what problem to answer?	YES NO

Answering “Yes” to the questions above means that you need to do a better job of using your assignment pad.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

ACTIVITY 10
IT ADDS UP

How well do you use your time? When you look back on your day, how much time do you think you wasted? It's amazing how easy it is to waste time doing things that aren't important—or even doing nothing at all! By looking at how you spend your time, you can set goals for using your time more wisely.

Fill in the chart below by estimating how much time (in hours or fractions of hours) you spend on each of the activities on an average day. Though some days may be different from others because of weekly music lessons, varying sports schedules or other activities, do your best to imagine your average day.

\* NOTE: your estimates should be measured in hours:  $\frac{1}{4}$  hour,  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour,  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour or 1 hour.

Sleeping	
Personal care (bathing, grooming)	
Eating or preparing meals	
Doing chores	
Spending time with family	
Spending time with friends	
Solitary time: TV, video games, music, etc.	
Exercise or sports	
Transportation	
School	
Studying	
Part-time job	
Other	
Other	
Other	
Other	

Once you have finished this chart, examine it carefully. Are there any areas where you need to spend less time? More time? Explain below.

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# FACT SHEETS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Want to be an organized student? One of your first steps is to learn how to make a good schedule that will help you keep track of your time.

Here are some tips for how to make a good schedule:

### Plan ahead

A schedule will help you only if you prepare it at least a few days in advance. So try to write down any activities you expect to be doing in the next five to seven days.

Keep in mind that planning things too far in advance (i.e., more than a week into the future) can sometimes backfire, because there is a greater chance of unforeseen events interfering with your plans.

### Priority goes to the activities that are “set in stone”

The first things to put into your schedule are any activities that are absolutely mandatory and must occur at a certain time on a certain day. If you have doctor appointments or special lessons scheduled for a certain day, write those down first, before you start planning other activities. Don't try to schedule homework time on Tuesday afternoon only to remember later that you have a piano lesson or volleyball practice.

### Be realistic

While a little bit of optimism in your schedule might push you to succeed, too much can lead to disaster. When you are budgeting your time, don't assume that you can complete each task in the minimum amount of time. Instead, plan for close to the maximum. After all, it's better to have extra free time than it is to find yourself needing to be in two places at once.

### Leave free time

You might be tempted to try to put yourself on a schedule for every hour of every day. Not only is this unreasonable, but it would also be incredibly stressful. Don't be upset if your schedule has holes in it. You never know when something unexpected will come up.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Great test-takers are usually well-organized. Nobody is born with good test-taking skills. Here are some pointers on how to be more prepared for tests in the future:

### Gather all materials

The first step to good test preparation is collecting all of the materials you need to study for your test. These may include class notes, prior quizzes and review sheets provided by your teacher. Whatever information you have should be at hand when you start to study.

### Choose your study style

Different students develop different styles for studying. You need to develop techniques that work for you. Maybe you should study alone. Maybe your parents should help by asking you questions to help you review. You might study best with a friend. You might want to make charts or flashcards. Try several methods and pick the one that's best for you and the test you're preparing to take.

### Ask your teachers for suggestions

Your teachers can help you learn how to effectively prepare for tests. As you prepare to study (several days before the test), ask your teacher if the materials you plan to review are the right ones. The day before the test or the morning of the test, go to school early and ask any last-minute questions.

### Get a good night's sleep

A good night's sleep the night before a test will help you think more clearly and focus on the questions. Record television shows and save video games for the weekend, especially when you have a major test.

*This activity is continued on the next page.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Eat a good breakfast

No need to overdo it, but taking time for breakfast can help you think more clearly. A growling sound for the duration of the test may have you concentrating more on food than on the test questions!

### Listen to the teacher's instructions

Before the test begins, pay particular attention to the teacher's instructions. You may hear some helpful suggestions or some details about a particular section of the test. Read all directions carefully before starting the test. If you don't understand the directions, ask the teacher to clarify them. A teacher won't give you an answer, but an extra explanation of the question may help.

### Budget your allotted time

Work as quickly as you can, but don't rush. You won't get an "A" for finishing first.

### Use good strategies when completing the test

Answer the questions you're sure about first. Next, complete the sections that are worth the most points. For true/false questions, remember the trick about watching out for words like "never" and "always." Frequently such statements are false. Read each question carefully. For multiple choice questions, try to recall the answer before you look at the choices. Use the process of elimination to help you on the tough ones.

### Don't turn in your test the minute you finish

If you finish the test before time is up, take a few minutes to review your answers. It's easy to make a mistake when you're rushing. When teachers say it's a good idea to "go over the test," they're right.

Source: adapted from [www.adventuresineducation.org/MiddleSchool/Planning/getorganized.cfm](http://www.adventuresineducation.org/MiddleSchool/Planning/getorganized.cfm)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Tips for organizing your backpack:

- Color-code your folders and books. Every subject should have its own folder for assignments and handouts. The folder should be the same color as the cover of the textbook for that subject.
- Don't be a packrat! Avoid backpack clutter by cleaning out anything you don't need. Things you will never need again can be thrown away, but things you might need in the future should be filed elsewhere. Don't use your backpack for long-term storage.
- Use multiple pockets. Almost all backpacks have a variety of pockets or compartments. Putting specific things in specific places saves you time and stress. For instance, always keep your calculator in the outside pocket.
- Avoid heavy lifting. Chances are you have many textbooks and binders that you need to bring to and from school. However, you probably don't need every heavy book every day. Think about the materials you will need at home or at school and leave books either in your locker or on your desk at home when they aren't needed.

### Tips for using an assignment pad:

Here are some helpful tips to ensure that you use your assignment pad to its fullest potential:

- Keep a note somewhere reminding you of long-term assignments.
- Write down the materials you need at home so you can leave the unnecessary items in your locker.
- Break your assignments down by subject and urgency.
- Write down any information you need to complete the assignment—for instance, phone numbers of group members or books to borrow from the library.
- Include reminders to yourself about extra-curricular activities.
- For large projects, break down individual sections into small mini-assignments so that you don't wind up doing all of the work at the last minute.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

The type of space where you typically go to study is important. If you study in a quiet, well-planned space, chances are that you'll get your work done more quickly and efficiently than if you try to finish an assignment in the middle of a noisy family room.

Here are some tips to help you plan your own good study space:

## Do...

- Keep pencils, pens, loose-leaf paper and other supplies close at hand.
- Hang a sign on your door asking for quiet.
- Find a place where you can be alone when you need to concentrate.
- Post a whiteboard with important reminders on a wall.
- Have a clock nearby so you can keep track of your time.
- Listen to soft music with headphones if noise is a problem.
- Get comfortable.

## Don't...

- Have a TV, radio, phone, etc.
- Hang distracting posters.
- Have distracting or messy food. A small snack is okay, but you shouldn't try to study and eat a meal at the same time.
- Collect garbage or unnecessary papers.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**GETTING YOUR  
PARENTS INVOLVED**

Your parents can be a big help in keeping you organized. They want you to do well in school—plus, the more organized you are, the easier it is for them! Here are some ideas for getting your parents involved.

#### Reminders

Install a whiteboard or bulletin board in your kitchen. On this board, you and your family can put reminders for each other about things they need.

#### Communicate

Tell your parents in advance if you'll need their help. Your parents are almost certainly busier than you are. If you need a ride somewhere, be sure to let your parents know about it in advance.

#### Homework check

Your parents might not have time to read over your homework word for word, but they should at least be able to make sure it's all done.

#### Set goals

Talk to your parents about your goals. Your parents want you to succeed at what you want to do, but they also probably have some goals in mind for you as well. Discussing these things openly is a good way to find out how they can help you achieve your goals and theirs.

#### Agree beforehand

While parents can certainly provide a helpful reminder, many kids feel hassled if their parents are constantly reminding them to do everything. Talk with your parents about the level of involvement you want them to have in your study habits. However, you need to make sure you can keep your promises or else they will feel that they aren't doing enough.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Check out these websites for information on developing good study skills and being an organized student.

*Virginia Tech Division of Student Affairs website*  
[www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/stdyhlp.html](http://www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/stdyhlp.html)

*Study Skills Topic Pages*  
[www.how-to-study.com](http://www.how-to-study.com)

*College of St. Benedict / St. John's University Office of Academic Advising*  
[www.csbsju.edu/academicadvising](http://www.csbsju.edu/academicadvising)

*Chemeketa Community College Study Skills website*  
[www.howtostudy.org](http://www.howtostudy.org)

*University of Texas at Austin Reading/Writing/Study Skills Center*  
[www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/rwsstc/resources/index.html](http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/rwsstc/resources/index.html)

*Santa Barbara City College Learning Support Services*  
<http://lss.sbcc.net/orientation/skills>

*The Study Skills Help Page*  
[www.mtsu.edu/~studskl](http://www.mtsu.edu/~studskl)

*University of St. Thomas Study Guides and Strategies*  
[www.iss.stthomas.edu/studyguides/](http://www.iss.stthomas.edu/studyguides/)

*California Polytechnic State University Academic Skills Center*  
[www.sas.calpoly.edu/asc/ssl.html](http://www.sas.calpoly.edu/asc/ssl.html)

*Homework Helper Study Skills*  
[www.infoplease.com/homework/studyskills1.html](http://www.infoplease.com/homework/studyskills1.html)

If you're still having trouble getting your homework done, talk to your teacher, parent or family member, or a school counselor. You can also get helpful information from the sources on the next page.

*This Fact Sheet is continued on the next page.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## PRINT RESOURCES

Dodge, Judith. *The Study Skills Handbook (Grades 4-8)*. Scholastic Inc., 1994.

Fender, Gloria. *Learning to Learn: Strengthening Study Skills and Brain Power*. Incentive Publications, 1990.

Fry, Ronald W. *The Great Big Book of How to Study (Great Big Books)*. Delmar Thomson Learning Inc., 1995.

Goldberg, Donna and Jennifer Zwiebel. *The Organized Student: Teaching Children the Skills for Success in School and Beyond*. NY: Fireside Publisher, 2005.

James, Elizabeth and Carol Barkin. *How to Be School Smart: Super Study Skills*. HarperTrophy, 1998.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

[www.homeworkhelppage.com](http://www.homeworkhelppage.com)

[www.homeworkspot.com](http://www.homeworkspot.com)

[www.organizedstudent.com](http://www.organizedstudent.com)

[www.schoolwork.org](http://www.schoolwork.org)

[www.studystack.com](http://www.studystack.com)

[www.sleepfoundation.org/site/c.huIXKjM0IxF/b.2417485/k.106/How\\_Much\\_Sleep\\_Do\\_We\\_Really\\_Need\\_Page\\_2.htm](http://www.sleepfoundation.org/site/c.huIXKjM0IxF/b.2417485/k.106/How_Much_Sleep_Do_We_Really_Need_Page_2.htm)

<http://health.msn.com/womenshealth/articlepage.aspx?cp-documentid=100110608>

[www.stress.about.com/od/studentstress/ht/schoolstress.htm](http://www.stress.about.com/od/studentstress/ht/schoolstress.htm)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER PROGRAMS  
FROM HUMAN RELATIONS MEDIA

<i>I Can't Do My Homework, Why?</i>	VHS/print or DVD/print
<i>Developing Good Study Skills</i>	VHS/print or DVD/print
<i>Making a Good Impression: Resumes, Interviews and Appearance</i>	VHS/print or DVD/print
<i>Business Ethics on the Job</i>	VHS/print or DVD/print
<i>Curriculum in a Box: Careers and Vocations</i>	video/print curriculum
<i>What's School Got to Do with It?</i>	VHS/print or DVD/print
<i>Carving Your Own Path: Youth in the New Economy</i>	VHS/print or DVD/print
<i>What's Your Attitude? Getting in the Mood to Work</i>	VHS/print or DVD/print
<i>Social Skills Workshop</i>	VHS/print or DVD/print
<i>Stressed Out: Stress Management 101</i>	VHS/print or DVD/print
<i>The Road to Riches: Basic Money Management</i>	video/print
<i>The Road to Riches: Pros and Cons of Credit</i>	video/print

**Visit our website for detailed descriptions of the above programs.**

Available from  
Human Relations Media  
41 Kensico Drive  
Mount Kisco, NY 10549

Phone: 800 / 431-2050  
Fax: 914 / 244-0485  
Web: [www.hrmvideo.com](http://www.hrmvideo.com)