





Facilitating Independent Learners in Your Home

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Environment For Independent Learners

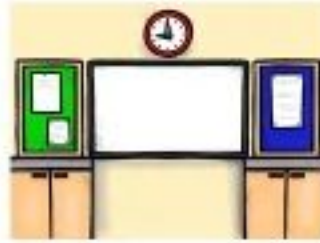


When children are disorganized, they can get overwhelmed. Multiple activities, classes, and deadlines for homework can be tough to manage. Learning organization strategies can help children be more efficient. It can also be a confidence-booster.

Strategies for Parents to Support Organization at Home

Here are some activities families can do to at home strengthen skills for organization:

- Create daily and weekly chore charts with organization and cleaning tasks.
- Reinforce cleaning up and putting materials away after completing a task.
- Try to have a place for everything.
- Avoid piles and put things away right away together.
- Openly discuss plans and schedules for the week or weekend.
- Use a **calendar** to keep track of home or school events.
- Play “Where Does This Go?”. Gather materials and have the child put them back in the right spot.
- **Create a designated spot just for homework with office materials**, as needed.
- Make organizing more fun by listening to music while you clean together.
- Make it a game by gathering 10+ items and time the child returning them to their correct spots.
- Use an **afternoon checklist** to remind the child of their responsibilities before/after school.



**Reduce distractions
around the room**



**Keep a daily schedule
posted**



**Keep a "classroom
office" stocked with
materials**



- Establish a location that works for your child to do homework
- Use a visual calendar/planner/schedule to keep track of events
- Dry-erase whiteboard for reminders
- Supplies "toolbox" - pencils with erasers, colored pencils/crayons, dry-erase marker, highlighter, scissors, glue stick
- Manage time with a timer
- Tray for papers brought home from school
- Access the homework (Canvas, HW Planner, Take Home Folder)
- Check-in with your child

Strategies to Keep Students Engaged and Motivated

- Alternate schoolwork with physical activity breaks (short walks, exercise)
 - Be mindful of avoidance and set expectations
 - Set clear expectations for your child and be consistent with them
 - Create a “must do” and a “may do” list
- Hands-on learning (reading, art, play, home science experiments)
 - Builds background knowledge and allows students to to make connections
 - Background knowledge is super-important for learning.
 - We need to activate those connections before we begin teaching the new content or skill.
 - Having strong background knowledge can actually improve our working memory.

- Find moments that fit your schedule to read together and talk about what your child is learning.
 - All levels of students still benefit from talking about what they are learning.
 - By having your child explain to you what they are learning, in their own words, it allows them to internalize and explain from a different point of view
 - Ask open ended questions to allow for flexibility of responses
- Support your child by modeling how to use time effectively
 - Use timers and set clear expectations
 - This is a lifelong skill that takes time to develop
 - Allow a small amount of productive struggle

Younger Students

- **Create and establish a routine that is realistic, flexible, and fits into your family's current needs**
 - I.e. Snack, homework, play time, reading, dinner, bath, and bedtime
 - Keep in mind structure may be necessary
 - Children benefit from knowing what will happen next
- **Allow your children freedom and flexibility within that routine**
- **Use visuals**
 - Picture schedules
 - Picture lists
 - Written schedule for readers (simple words for developing readers)
- **Provide choices when possible**
 - Choices give children a sense of control

How can I support independent learning?

- **Take a step back to allow your child to take steps forward**
 - Children learn best when they can take ownership of their own learning
- **Start with what your child is interested in**
 - What do they love? The more passionate they are about the subject, the more intrinsically motivated they will be
- **Match your child's passion with the appropriate medium**
 - Support them in finding videos, articles, books, or podcasts on the subject that interests them and let them jump into the learning process
- **Let them choose an activity**
 - A form of writing (comic book, journals, letters), drawing and illustrating, art projects, technology mediums such as slideshows or videos

*The key to success is providing your child with the space, freedom and flexibility to find their motivation from within (intrinsic motivation) and letting their learning be driven by their natural curiosity

Independent Learners in Purposeful Play

“Play is the work of childhood.” - Piaget

Some Tips for Encouraging Independent Play

- **Appropriate Toys** - Make sure the toys are right for your child's age and stage.
 - Not too challenging that they need help
 - Quality over quantity - too many can be overwhelming
 - Toys that can be explored in a lot of different ways (blocks, etc)
 - Passive toys encourage active play
- **Create a “Yes” Space** - A child-safe play space where children do not need to be told “no.”
 - Use storage that your child can manipulate.
- **Manage your expectations**
 - If kids are new to independent play it's ok to begin with 5-10 minutes.
 - Avoid commenting on their play - it may shift their attention.
- **Together Time** - Start with time together before moving to independence.
 - If possible play with your child for 15-20 minutes, then encourage them to play on their own.
- **Make Play a Habit** - build play into your child's routine.
 - Allow children to have time to just be themselves and explore their own environment each day.

Older Students



Schedules and Routines

- Establish a timeline: A regular homework schedule establishes predictable times when homework is to be completed. Once the homework schedule has been in place for a few weeks, you may even find your child will begin doing their homework without needing to be reminded.
- Ask for your child's opinion: Create the schedule and routine, with input from your child. Give them a sense of ownership!
- Be consistent

Allow for free time: natural learning is an important experience for your child to have. Learning “in the moment” whether it's during play, taking a walk, conversing with friends, natural learning allows for social/emotional growth and development.

Benefits to Schedules:



- Schedules also help instill good habits like completing work on time. Homework routines also improve study skills and encourage students to plan ahead.
- Other benefits include developing your child's work ethic and organizational abilities. By helping your child complete their work at regular intervals, you are modeling how to manage time and projects in the future.

How to recognize your child may be struggling with developing independent learning skills?

Notice

- Be open to what you are seeing
- Name what you are seeing (i.e., acting out, shutting down, crying, etc.)

Observe

- Focus on the behavior may help you pick up on patterns
- Take notes about what happens (where/when)
- Only take notes about what you see and hear

Talk

- Anyone that interacts with your child (i.e., educators, caregivers, pediatrician)

Engage

- Find a time when your child is able to have this conversation
- Tell your child you'd time to talk about how things are going
- Ask if there is anything your child wants to share (write/draw)
- Thank your child for sharing



What you might see and why...

Engaging in task avoidant behavior

- Taking hours to complete homework
 - Trouble concentrating
- Finishes homework or task very quickly
- Trouble getting started with homework (or other activities)
 - Excuses and procrastination (i.e., hungry, thirsty, tired, headaches, stomachaches)
- Spotlight behaviors
 - Refusing to do work, shutting down
 - Acting out-Crying, whining, screaming, etc.

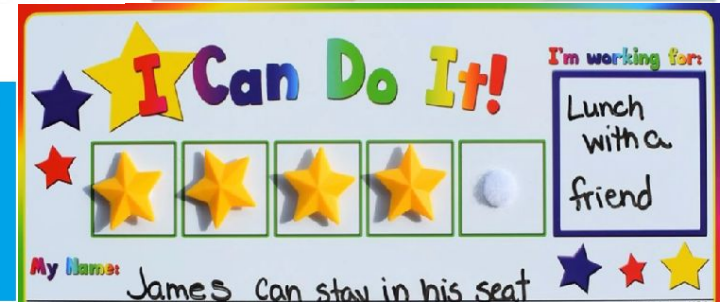
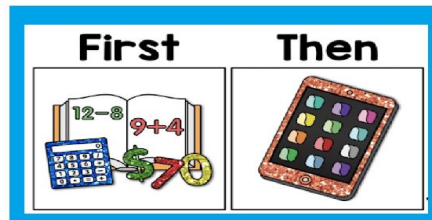
Why?

- Attention seeking (wanting to be control)
- Avoid/escape task
 - Work is difficult or perceived to be difficult (or too easy and bored)
 - Worried about parental approval
 - Fear of failure and/or anxiety
- Learned helplessness
 - Conditioned to assistance and feels helpless without it



Other Behavior Strategies to Help Foster Independence

- **Set goals with your children**
 - Involve your child in coming up with goals/chores
- **Check-ins (give task and walk away)**
 - Use a timer to help with homework
- **Rewards**
 - Chore chart, homework token board
 - Intermittent or fixed reinforcement
 - Behavior contract
- **Behavior momentum**
 - Easy tasks, followed by more difficult tasks
 - Help them get started
- **First/Then**
 - First homework, then play
 - First chores, then dessert



Questions?

