

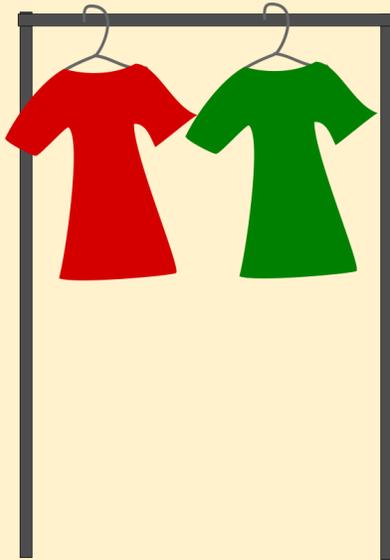
A stack of colorful sticky notes is piled on a corkboard. The top note is yellow and contains the text 'Executive Functions' and 'Planning & Organizing'. Other notes in shades of green, orange, purple, and blue are visible underneath. To the left of the stack, a single yellow sticky note is crumpled into a ball.

Executive Functions

**Planning &
Organizing**

During the day, there are many things you have to **get done**.

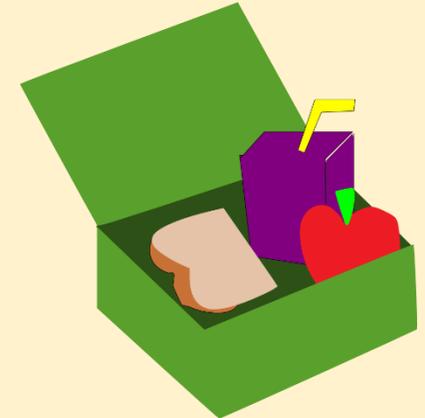
You need to get yourself dressed.



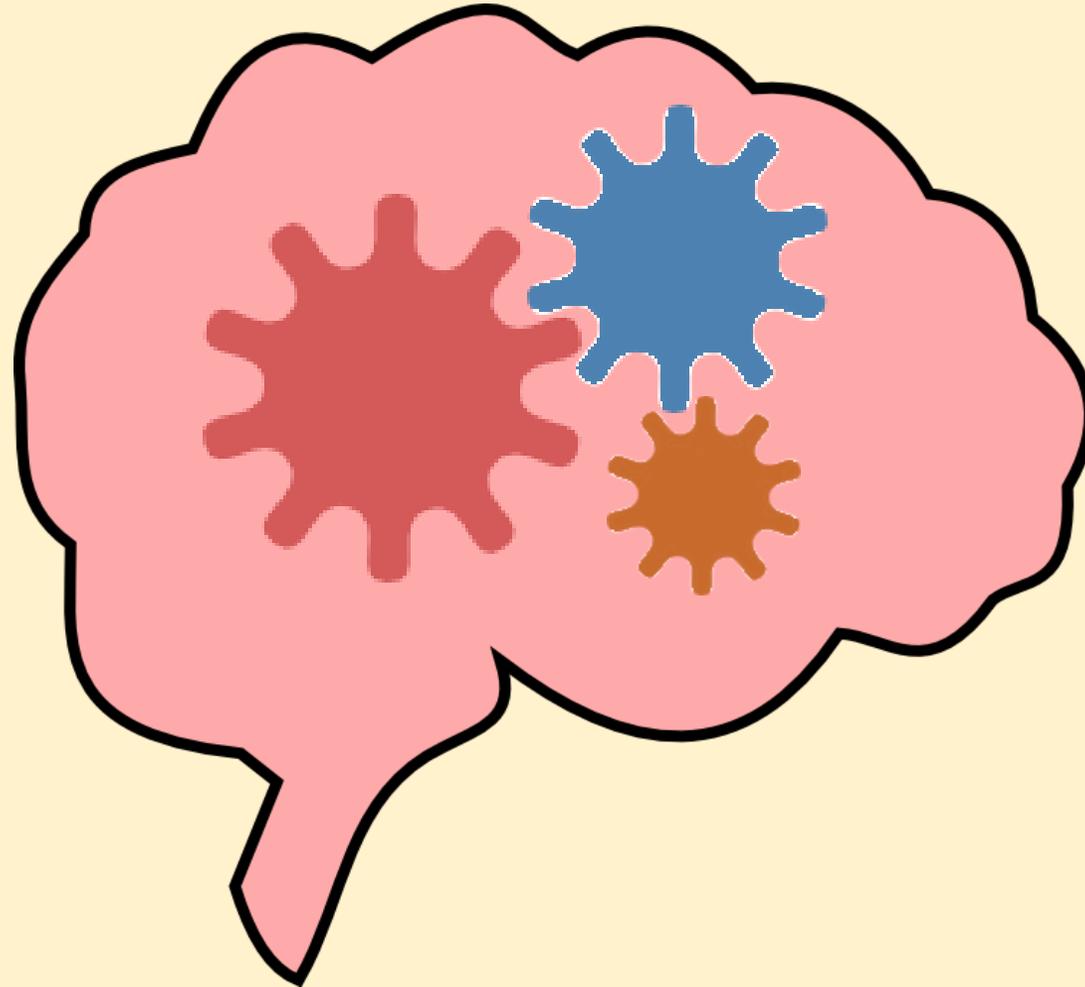
You might need to do homework.



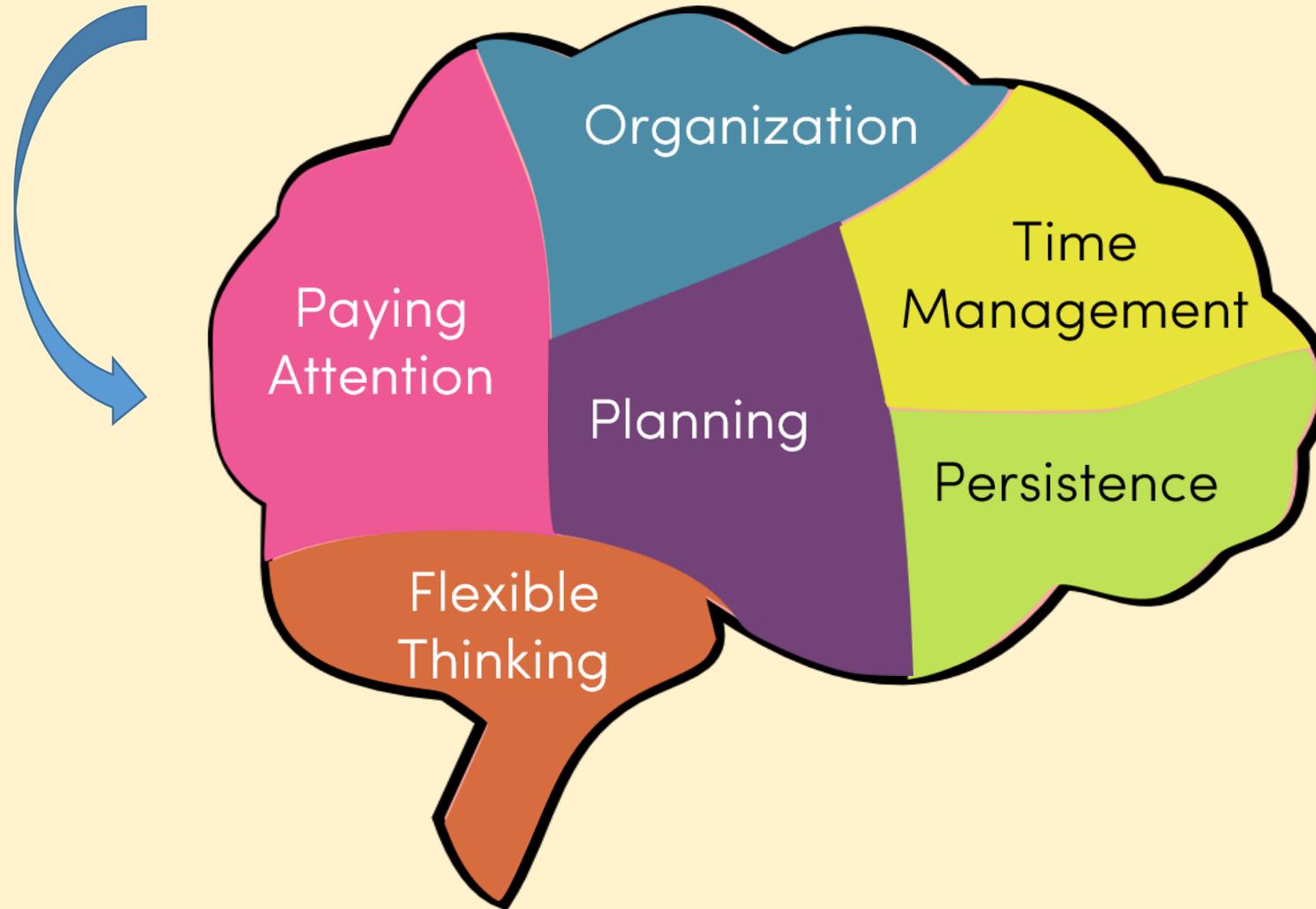
You might need to plan and pack your lunch for the next day.



Have you ever thought of what goes on in your brain when you try to **get something done**?



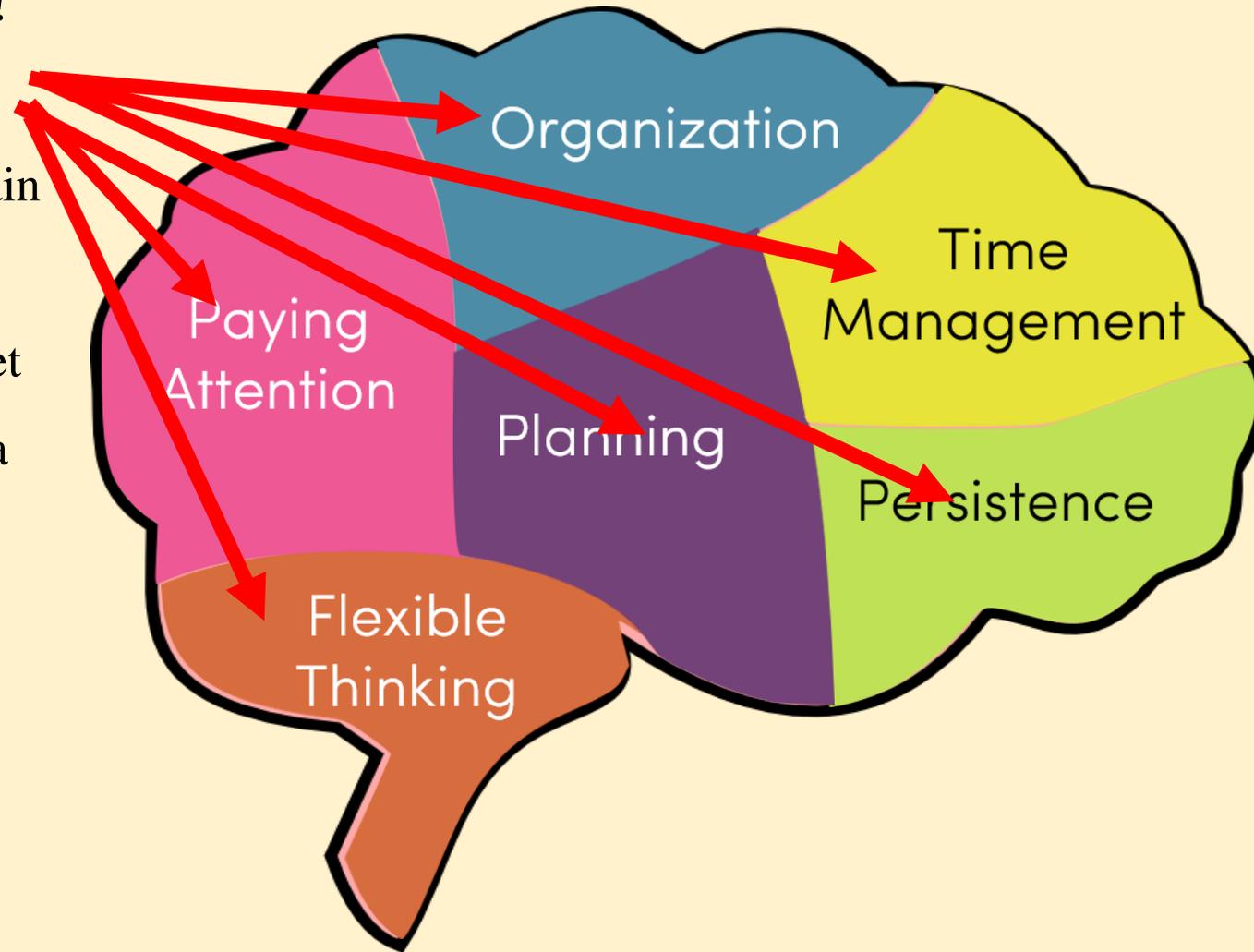
The picture below shows a few different parts of your brain that are in charge of different skills.



Click on which area you think you use to help you **get things done** like homework, packing your lunch, and choosing what to wear each day.

You're *partly* right!

This was actually a **trick question!** Your brain uses *all* of these functions to help you get things done, and even a few more.

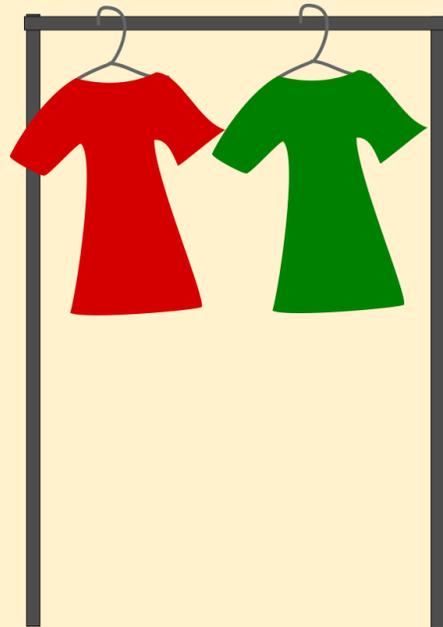


The skills below that help you **get things done** are called **executive functions**.

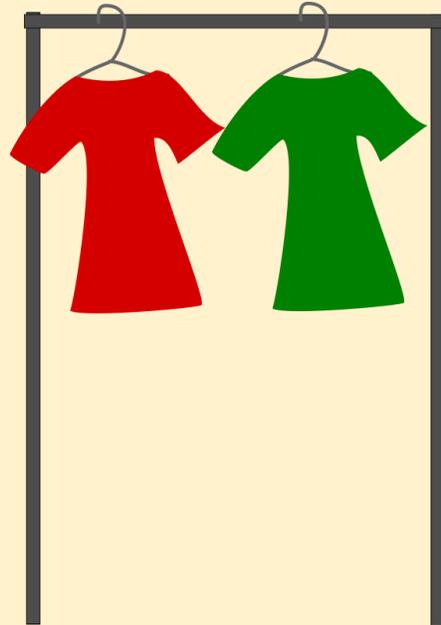


In order to do something like get dressed in the morning, you need to use several of these **executive functions**.

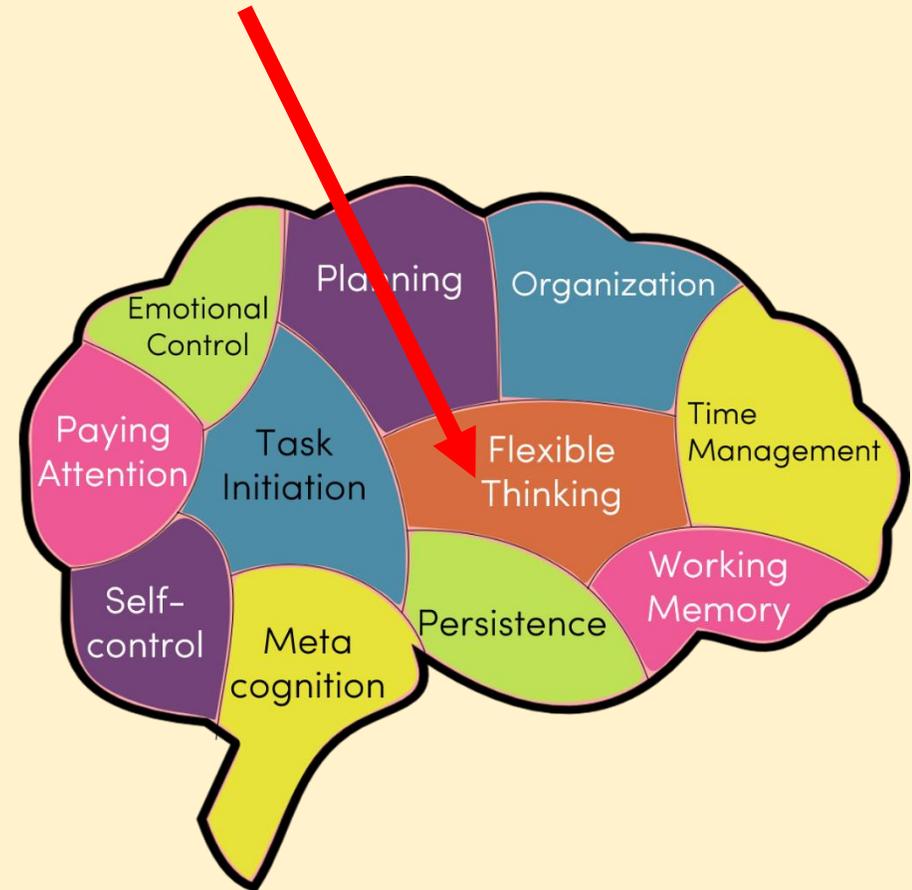
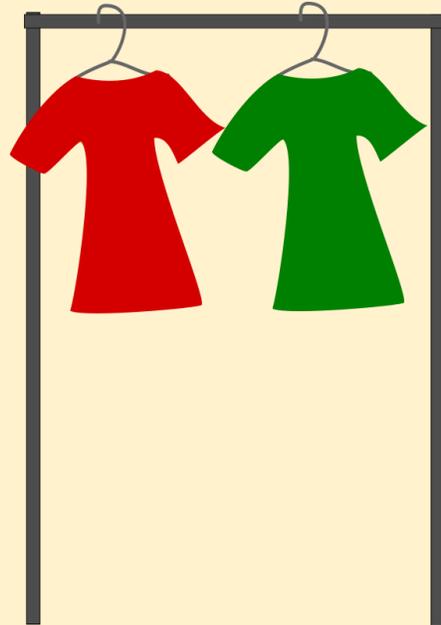
Your **task initiation** function helps you get out of bed and get started.



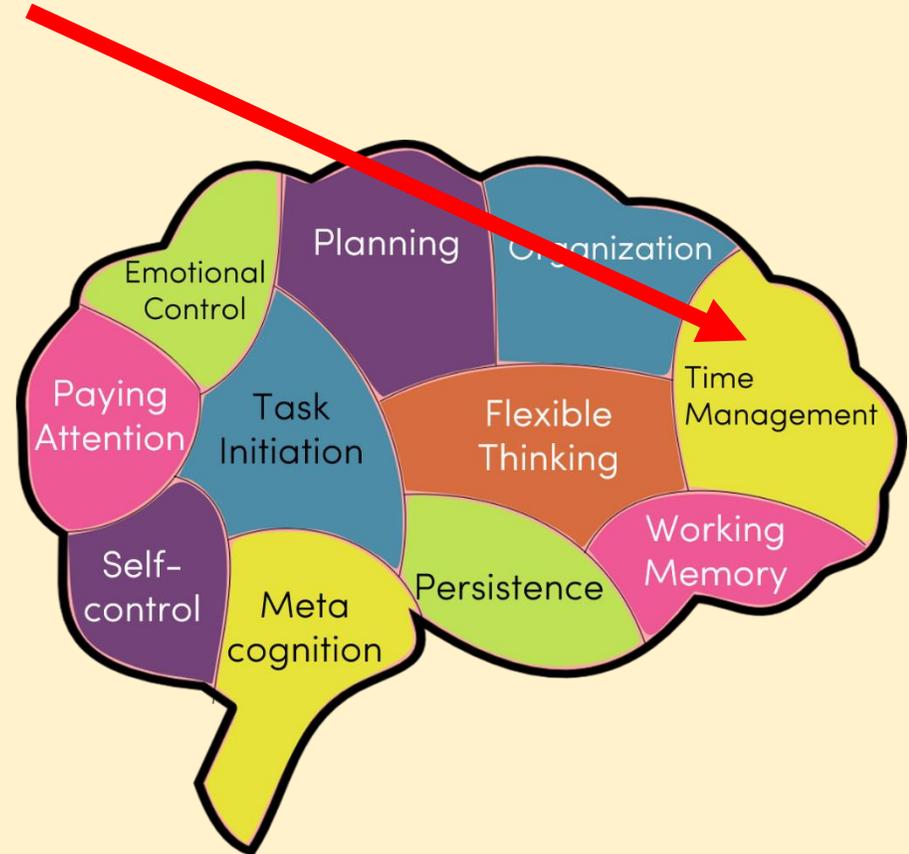
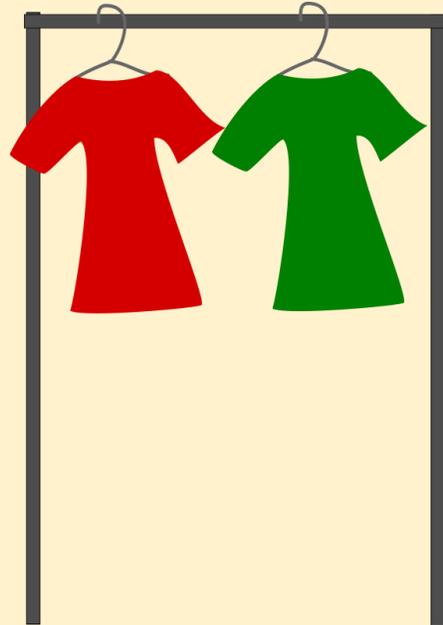
Your **planning** function helps you decide what to wear.



Your **flexible thinking** function helps choose something else to wear when your favorite pants are dirty.



Your **time management** function helps you keep track of time so you don't spend too much time deciding what to wear and end up being late for the bus.

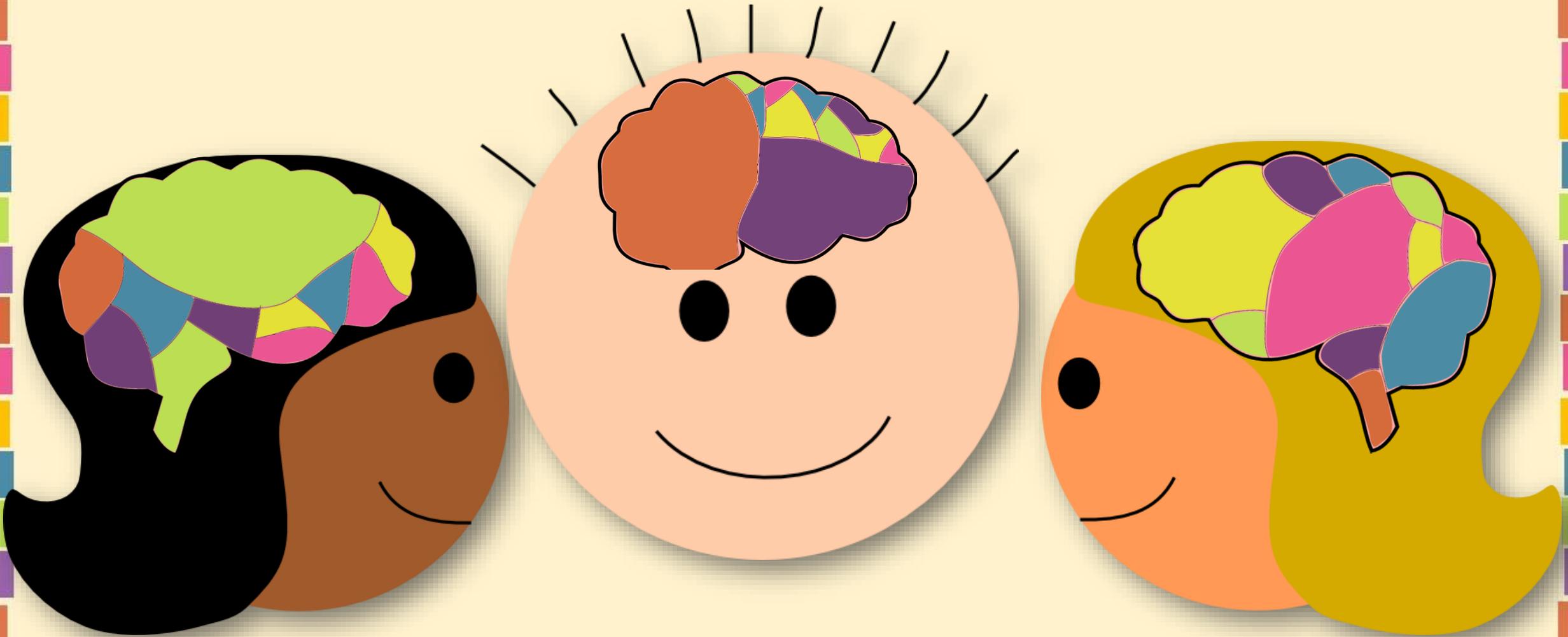


Throughout the day, you use all of these skills together to help you accomplish and do different things.



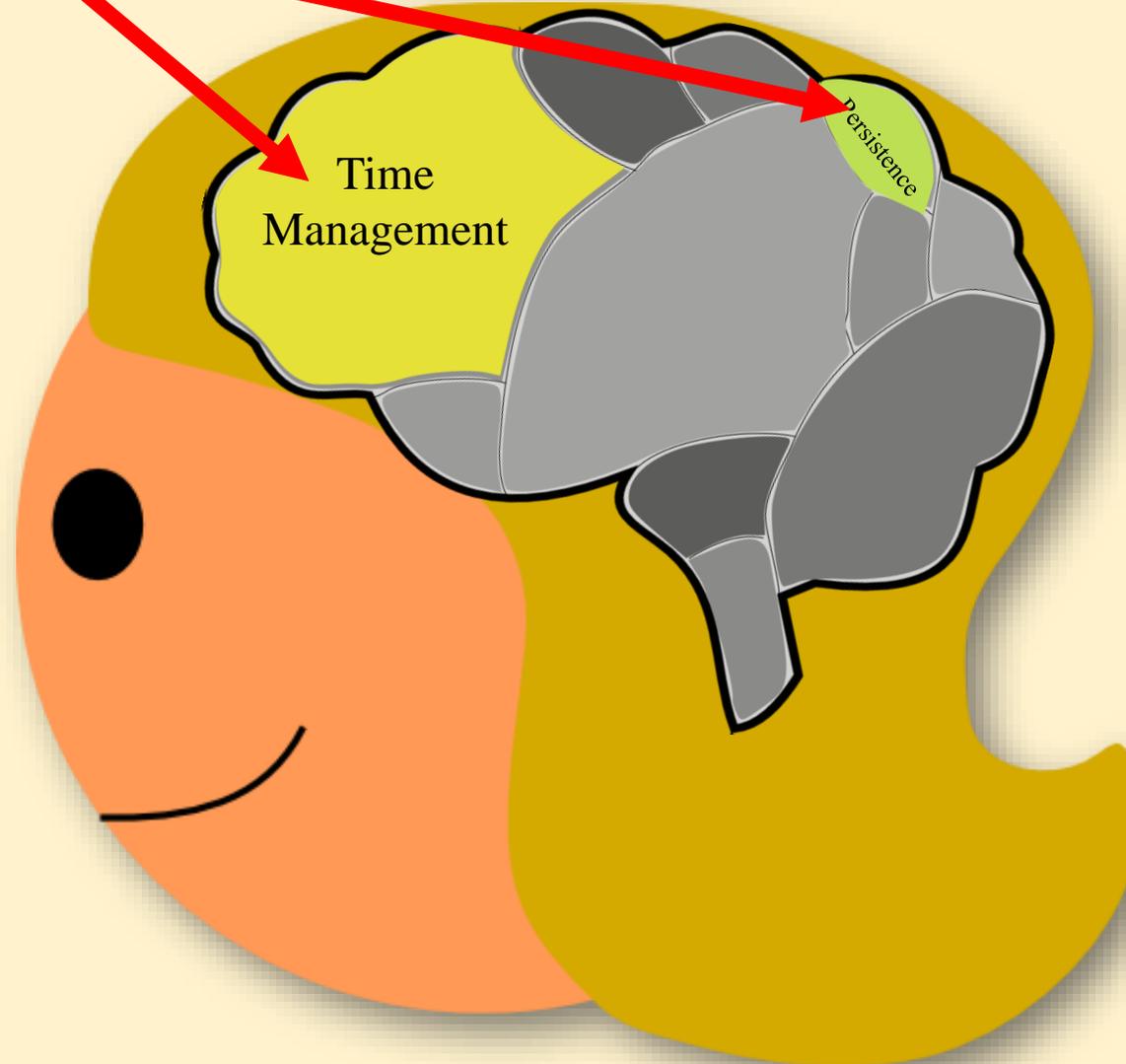
We all have all of these **executive functions**, but everyone's brain looks a little different.

In different brains some skills are **bigger**, and some skills are smaller.



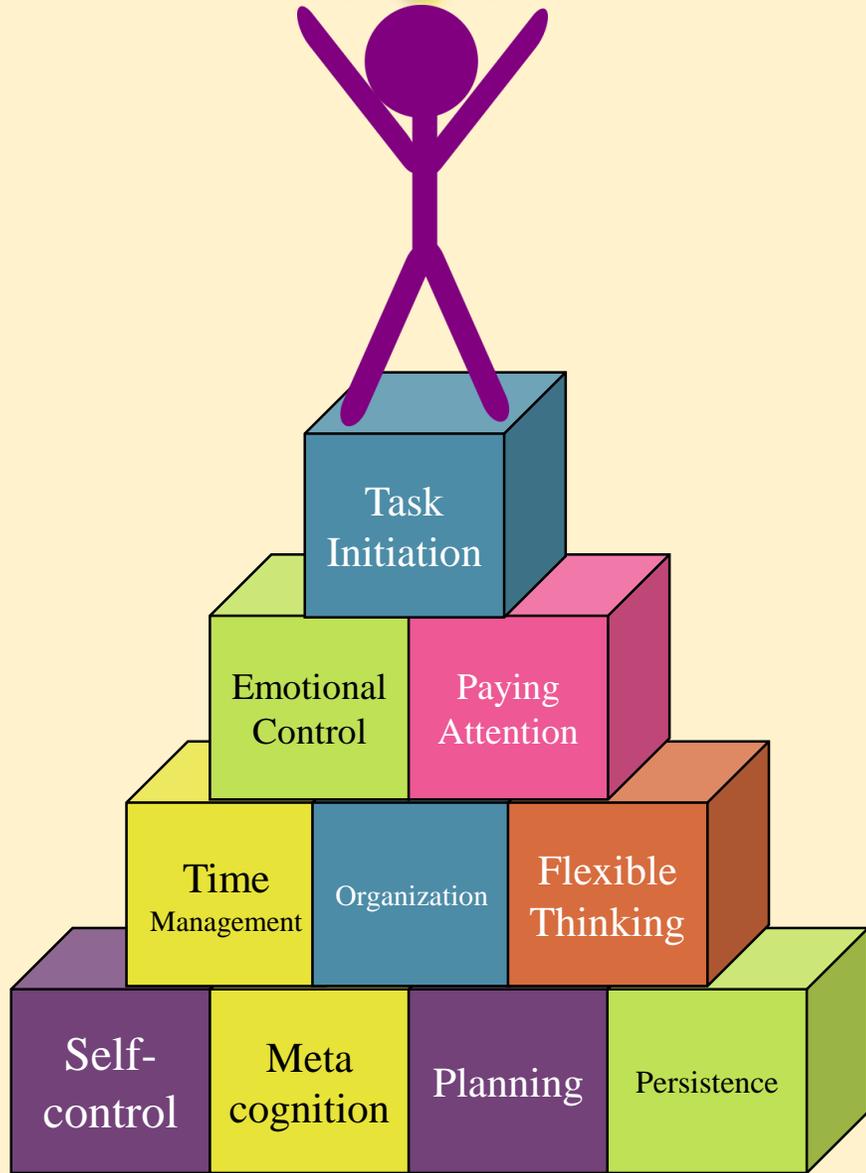
Everyone has some strengths in their executive functions. These are areas that they're good at.

Everyone also has some weaknesses in these skills. These are areas that need improvement.

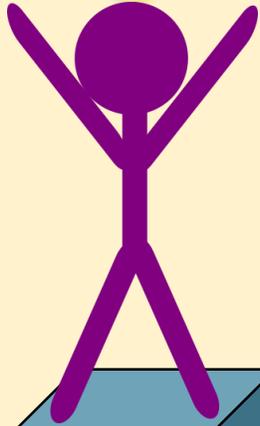


GOAL

Do you ever have trouble getting something done that you need to do?



GOAL



Task
Initiation

Emotional
Control

Paying
Attention

Time
Management

Organization

Flexible
Thinking

Self-
control

Meta
cognition

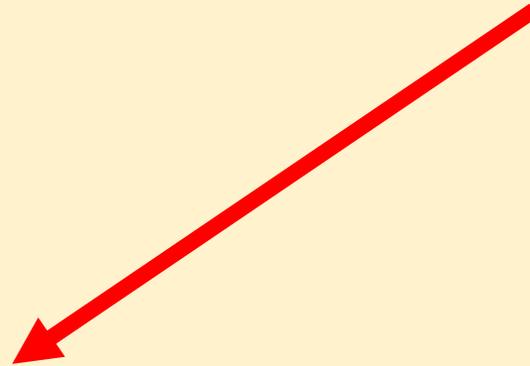
Planning

Persistence

We *all* do sometimes.

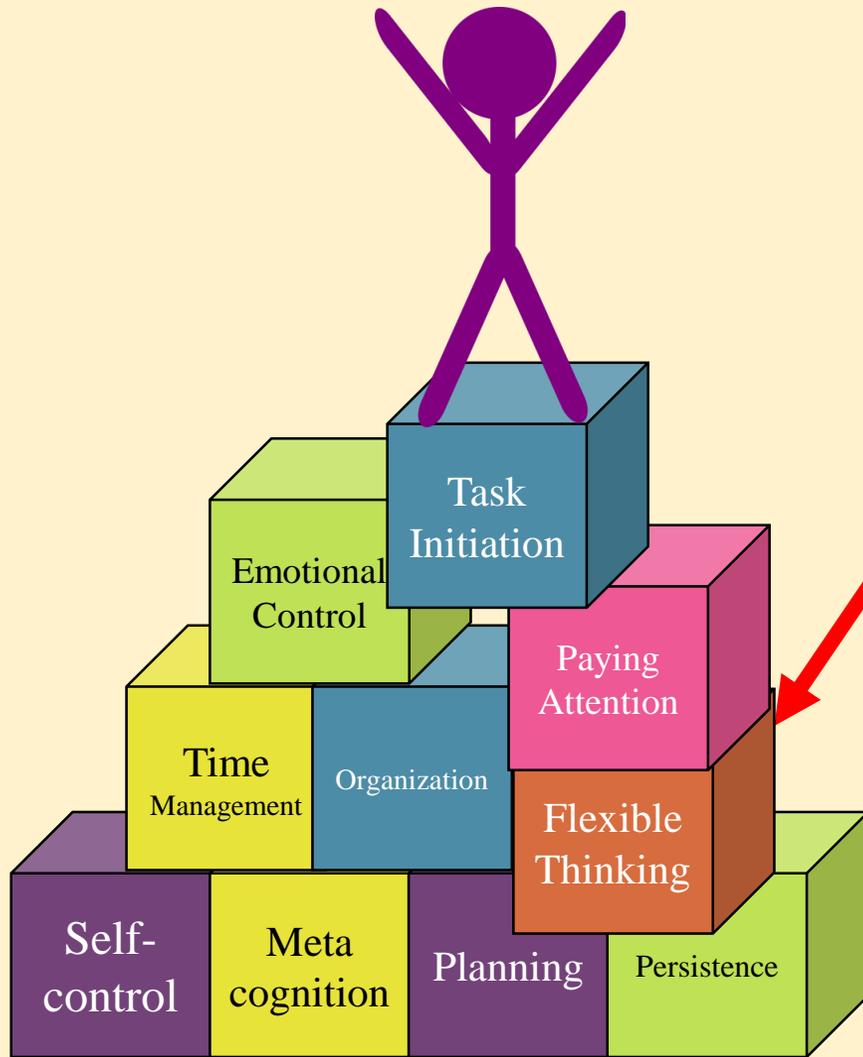
That's because all of us have different **executive functions** that are weak.

When an area is weak, it can make it harder to **get things done** and reach goals.



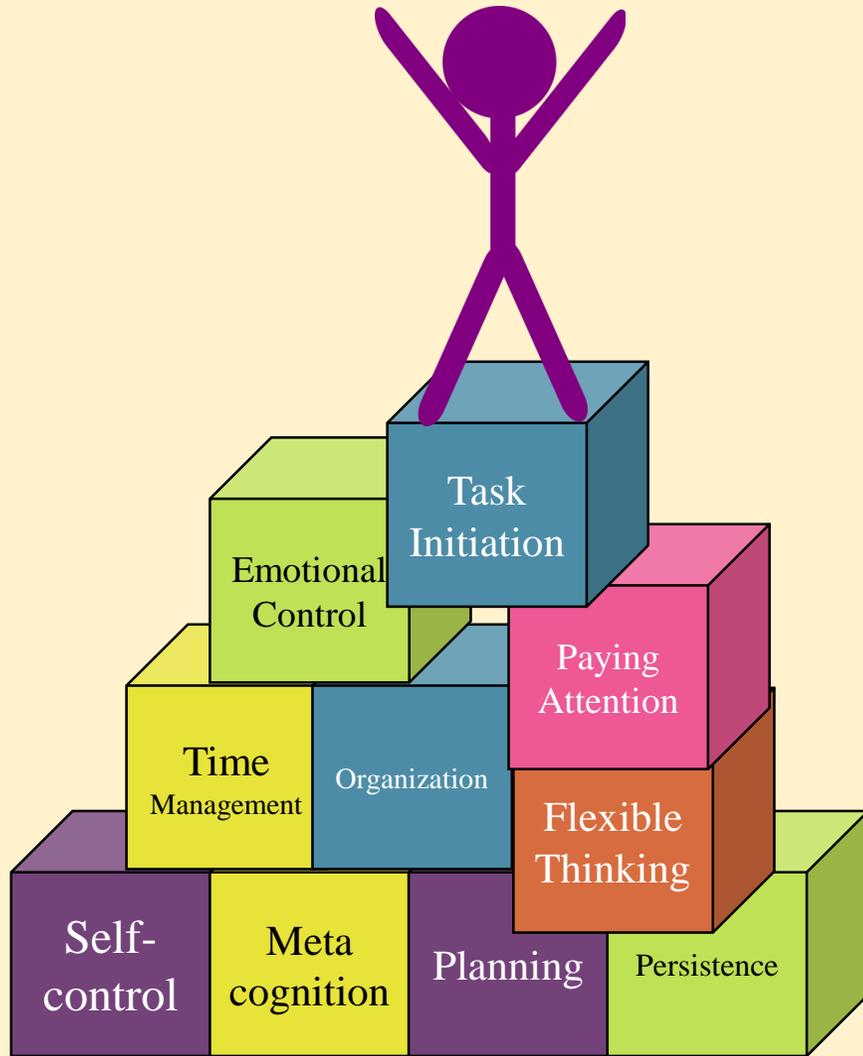
GOAL

When one of your **executive skills** is weak, there are **2** things you can do to help you still be able to reach your goals.



GOAL

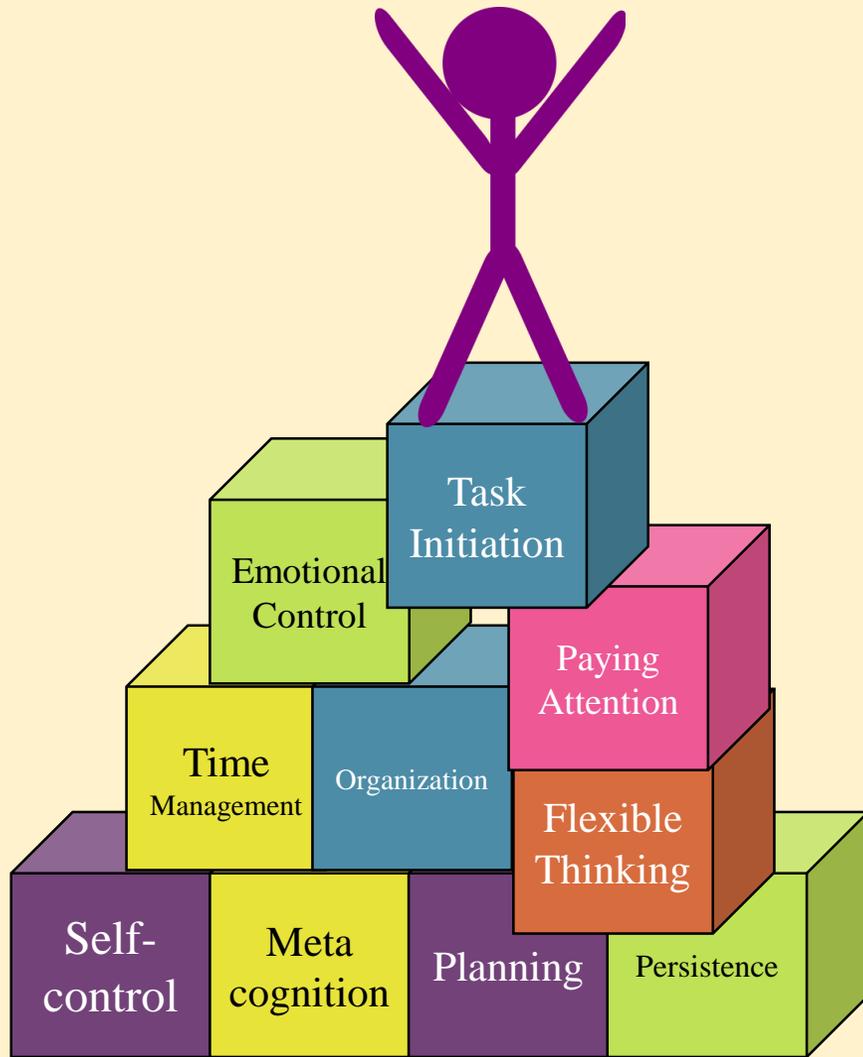
1st



We can strengthen that area by practicing using it more. The brain is like a muscle, and the more we exercise different parts, the stronger they get.

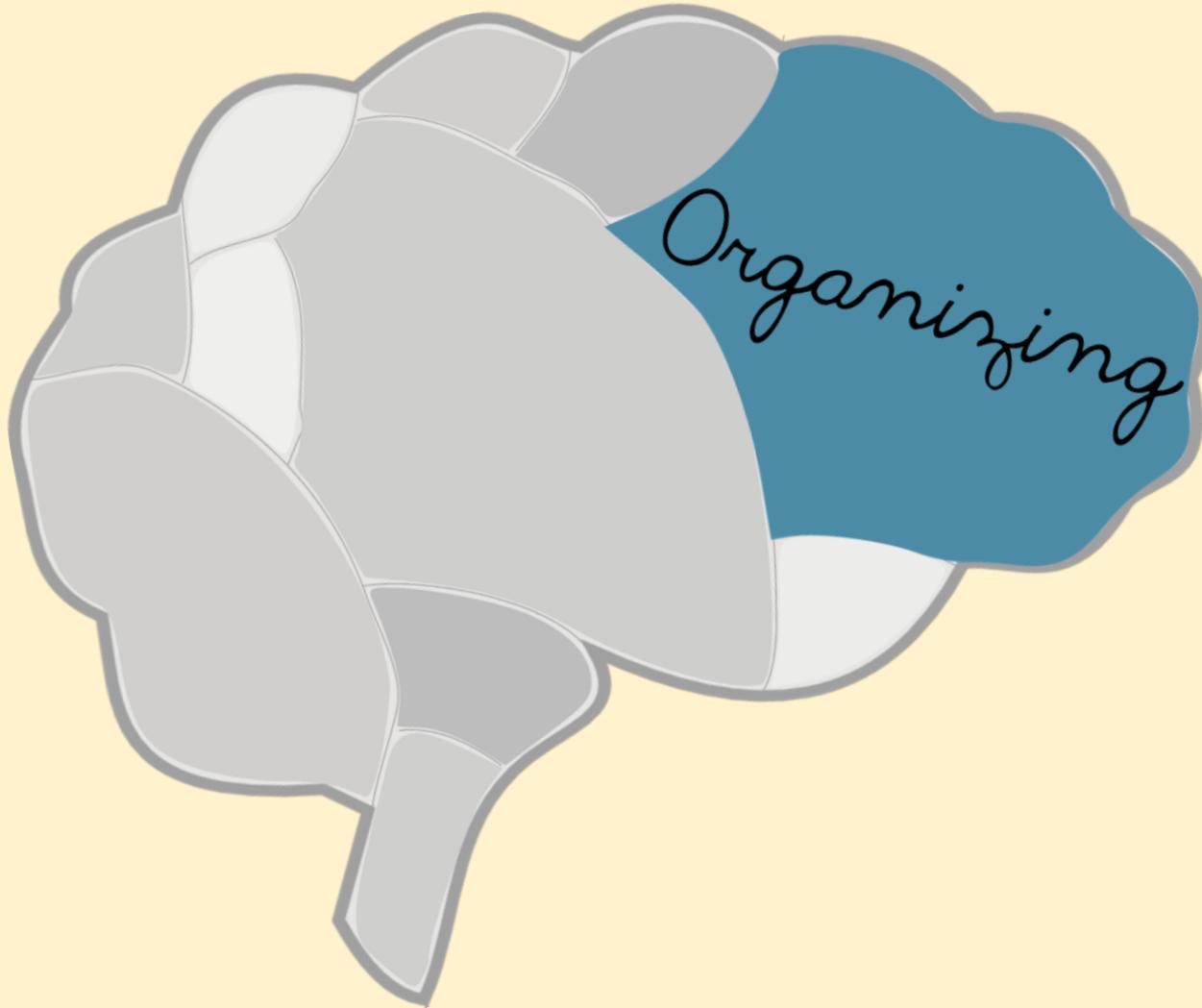
GOAL

2nd



We can strengthen the other areas to make up for the weak area. Even if our weak area never gets as strong as the others, we can still learn to **get things done** and be successful.

Today we'll learn about an **executive function** called organizing.

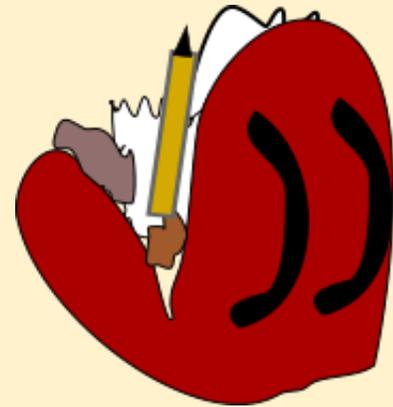
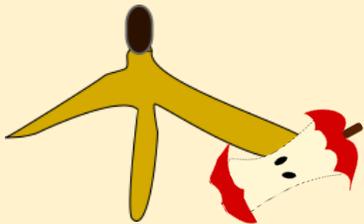
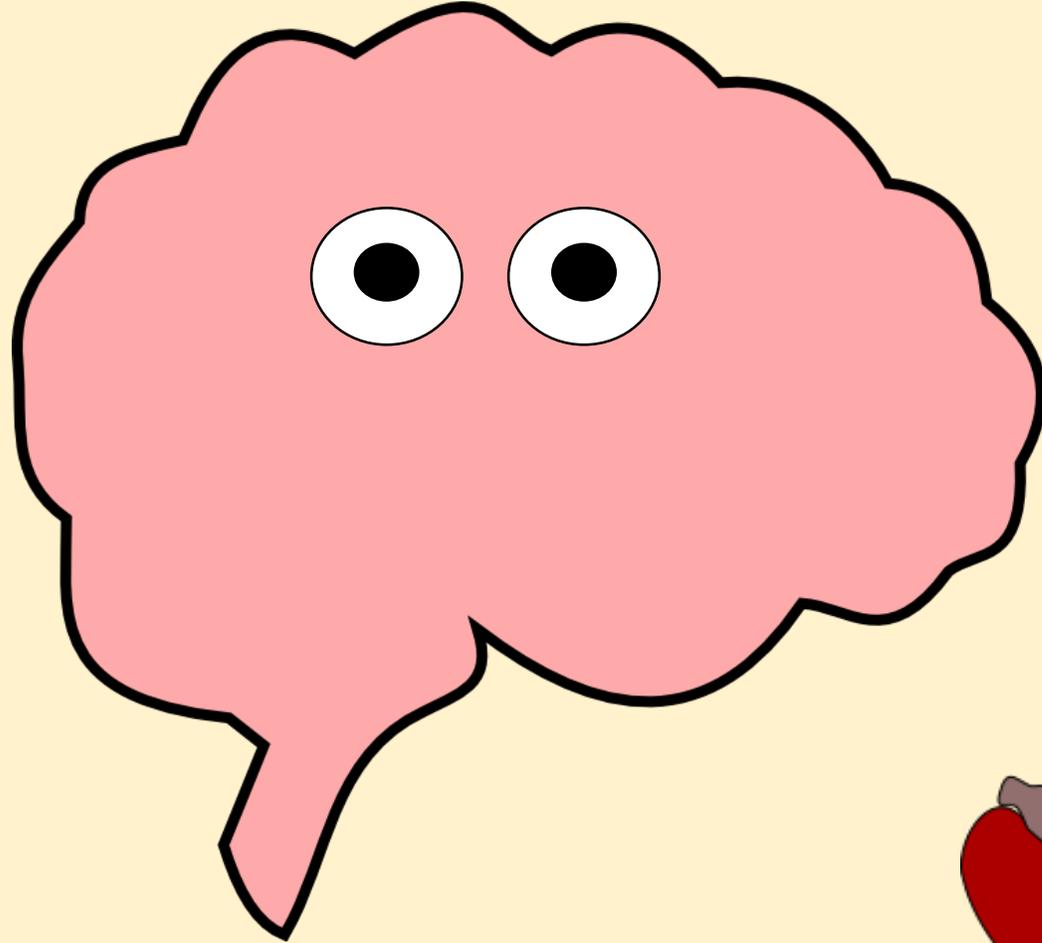
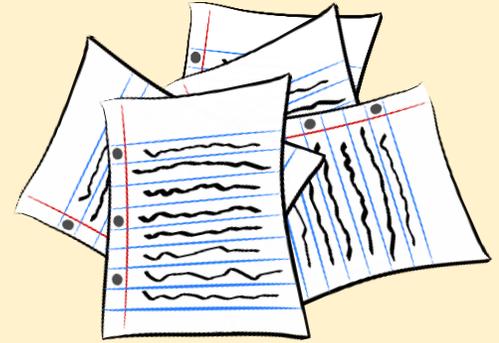
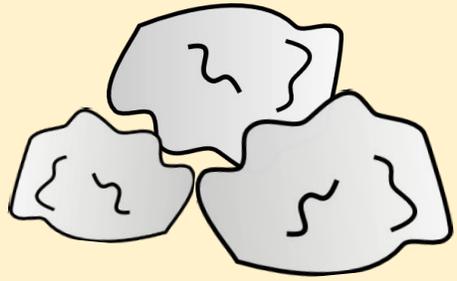


Your organizational skills help you to be happy and successful in life.

When you're **disorganized**, it makes it harder to learn. It can make it so you don't do well in school, even if you feel like you understand what's being taught.



That's because when things are disorganized and messy, your brain gets distracted.



Your brain *loves* things to be in order! If things are disorganized, your brain has trouble focusing on what you're learning. It'll be paying attention to all the mess and confusion instead of your teacher or your homework.

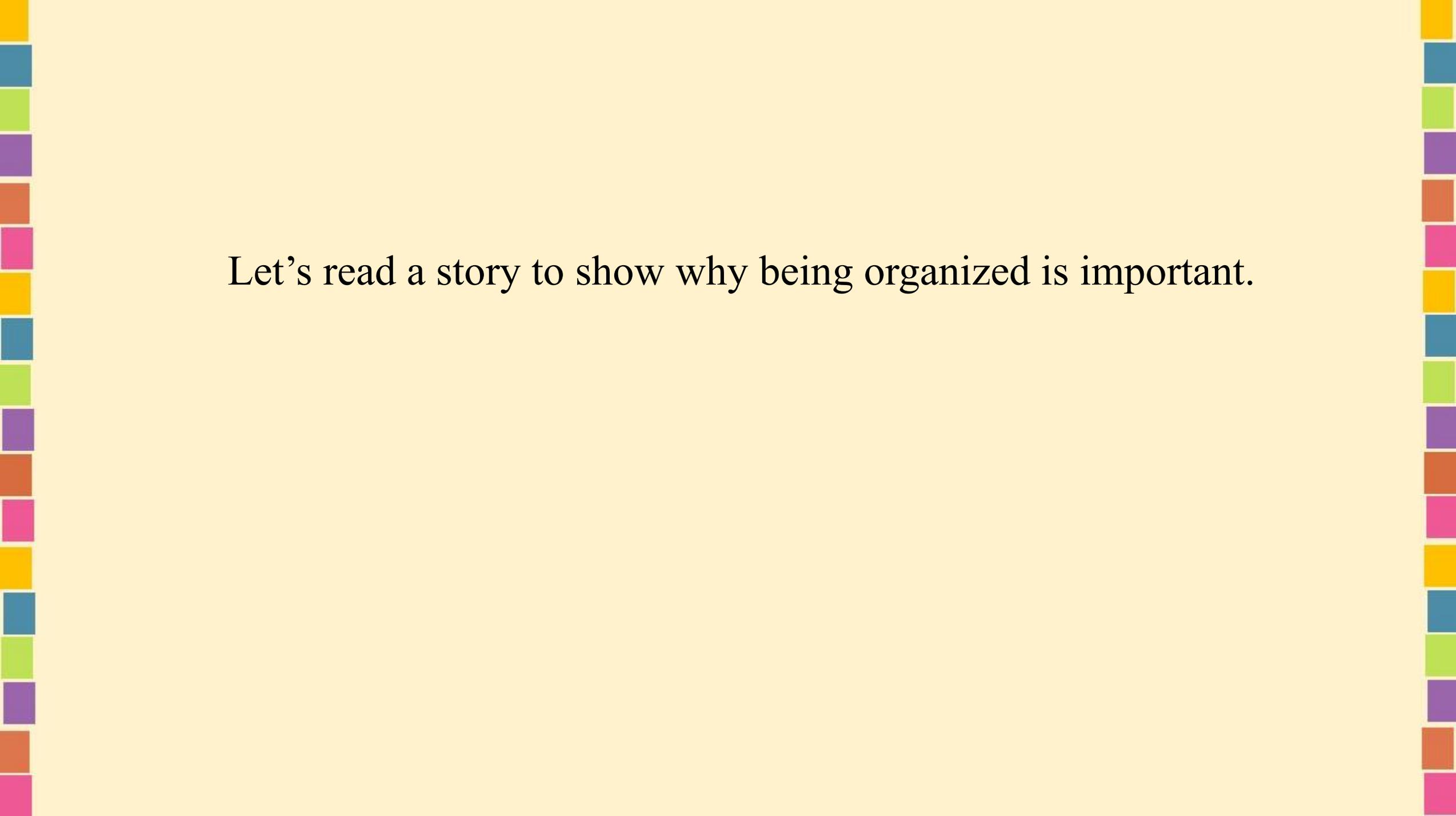


When your brain is focused so much on these other things, there's not much attention left for learning.

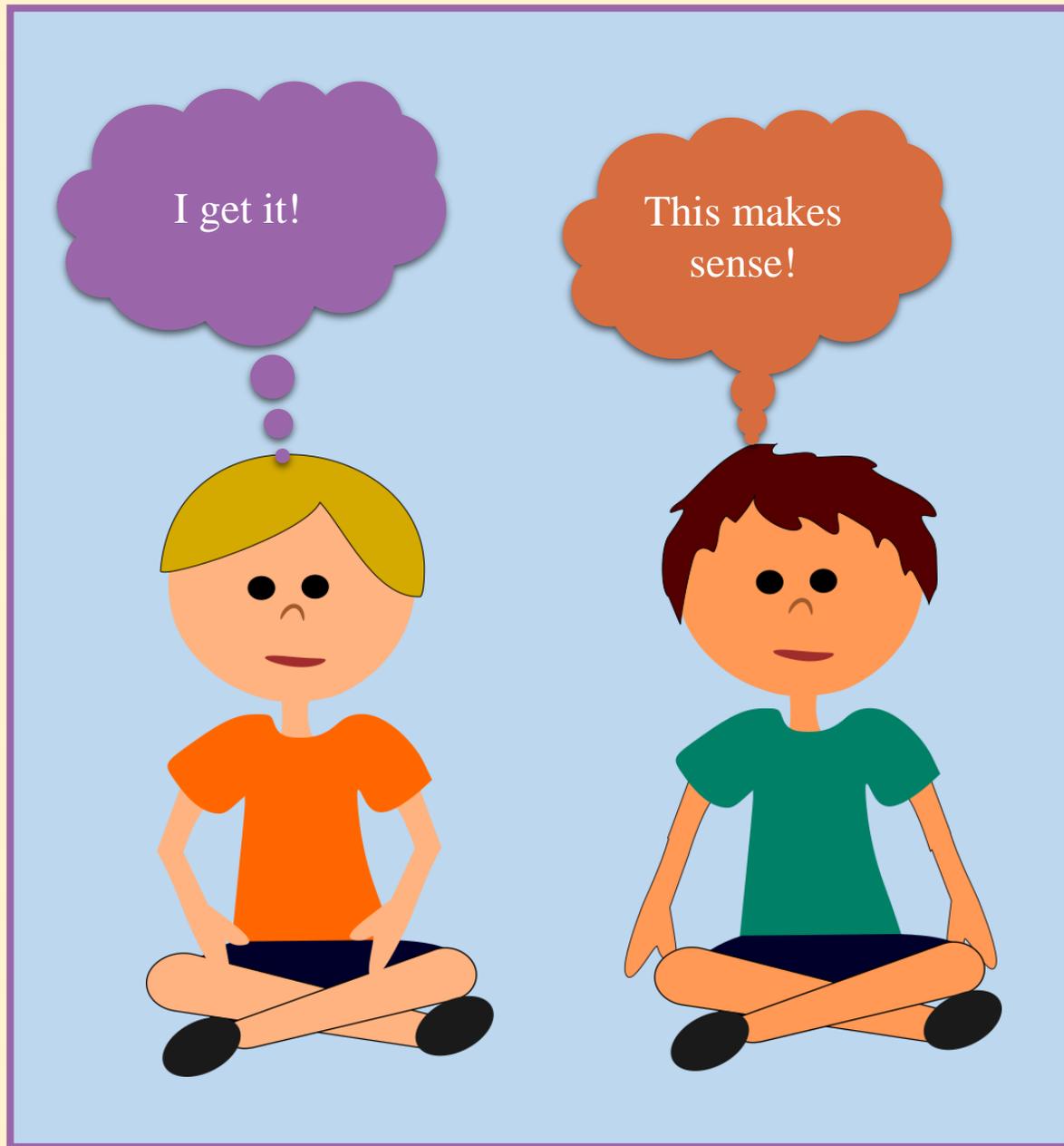


All the mess and disorganization raises your **stress level** and can put you in a bad mood, even if you don't realize it.
When your stress level goes up, it makes it harder to learn and it makes you less happy.



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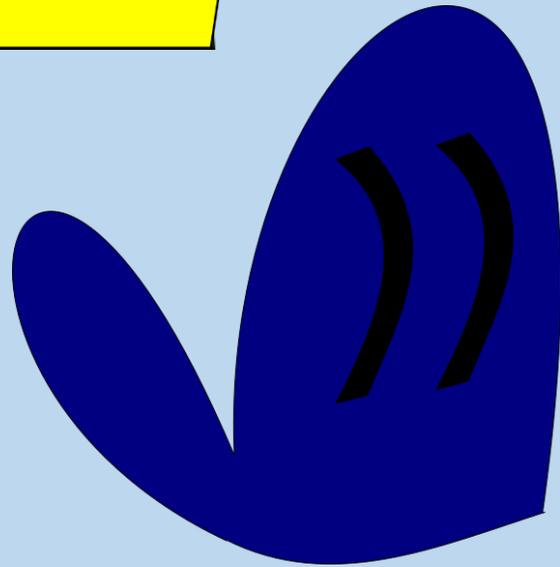
Let's read a story to show why being organized is important.



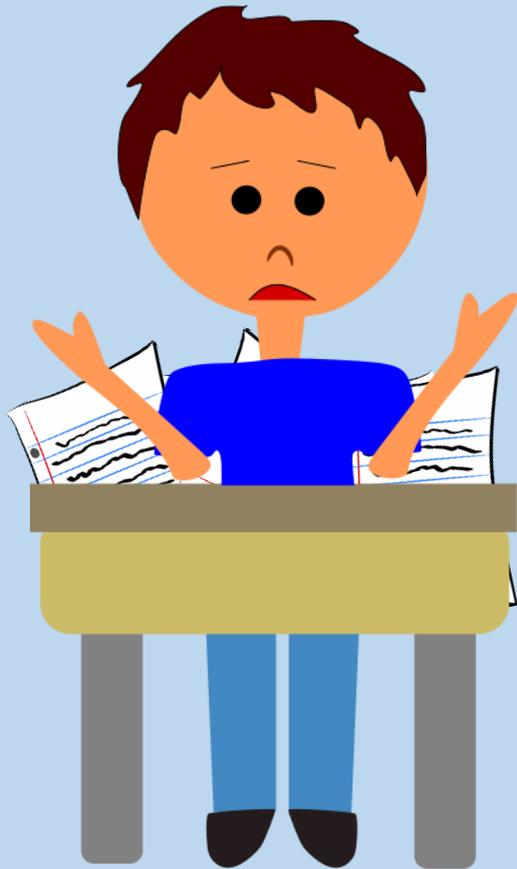
Benny and Louis are in the same class. For math, the teacher had them gather around while she taught them about fractions, and both of them understood it well. The teacher told them to go back to their desk and finish the front side of the paper and then to finish the back side for homework.

HOME
WORK

HOMEWORK
FOLDER

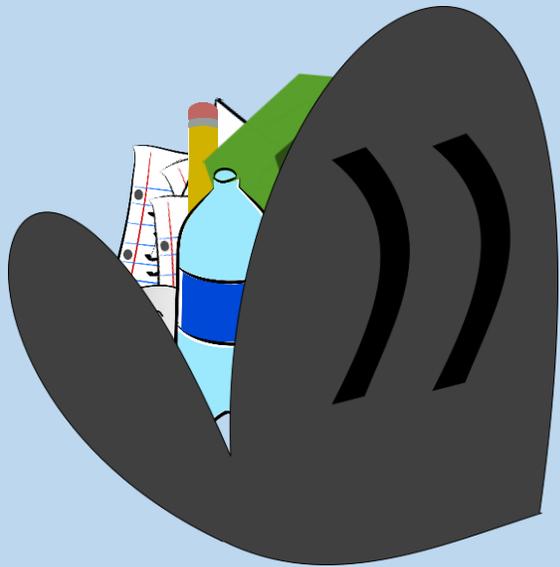


Louis went to his seat, got out his pencil, and finished the front side of the paper at his desk. Then he put the paper in his homework folder and zipped it up in his backpack to take home. Before leaving school that day, he tidied up his desk and threw away anything he didn't need. He double-checked to make sure he put the homework where it needed to be.



When Benny went back to his desk, he couldn't find his pencil. He searched in his desk but it was so crammed with stuff he couldn't find anything he needed. As he searched, lots of papers and garbage fell on the ground around him.

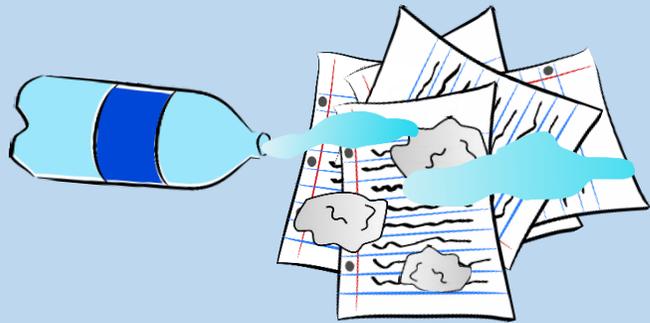
He finally just asked the teacher for a new pencil and went back to his seat. But now he couldn't find his paper! He searched and searched and eventually found it crumpled up under his foot. It took him 15 minutes to get started, and by then he had started to forget how to do the problems.



When Benny went back to his desk, he couldn't find his pencil. He searched in his desk but it was so crammed with stuff he couldn't find anything he needed. As he searched, lots of papers and garbage fell on the ground around him.

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He kept getting distracted by the mess around him. The bell rang, so he hurried and shoved the paper in his backpack along with his pencil, water bottle, and lunchbox.



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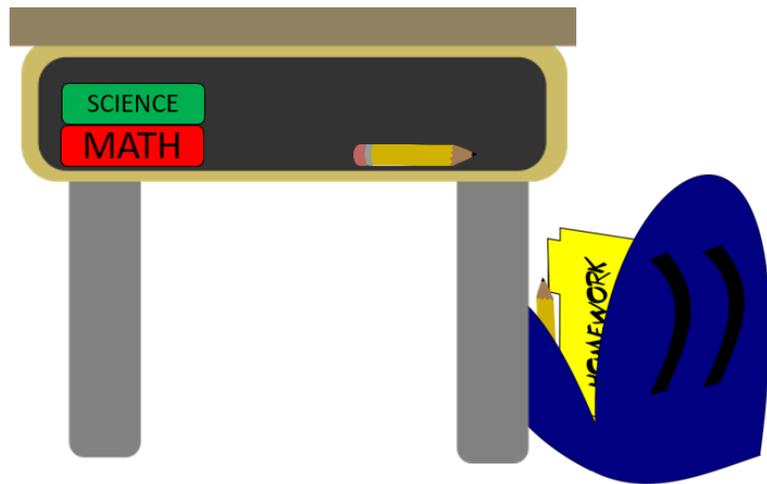
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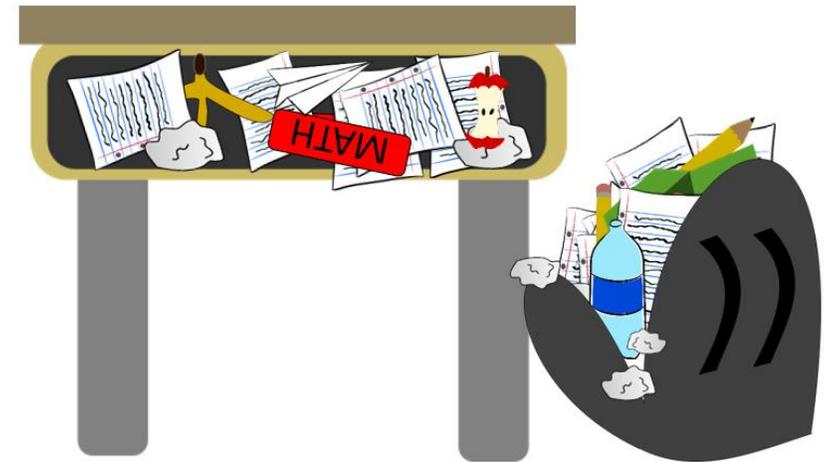
When he got home, he found out his water bottle had spilled all over everything, including his homework. He wasn't able to do the homework and felt like he'd have to relearn everything the next day just to get caught up.

This is what Louis and Benny's desk and backpack looked like at the end of the day. If you had to find a pencil or your homework, whose desk and backpack would you want to have?

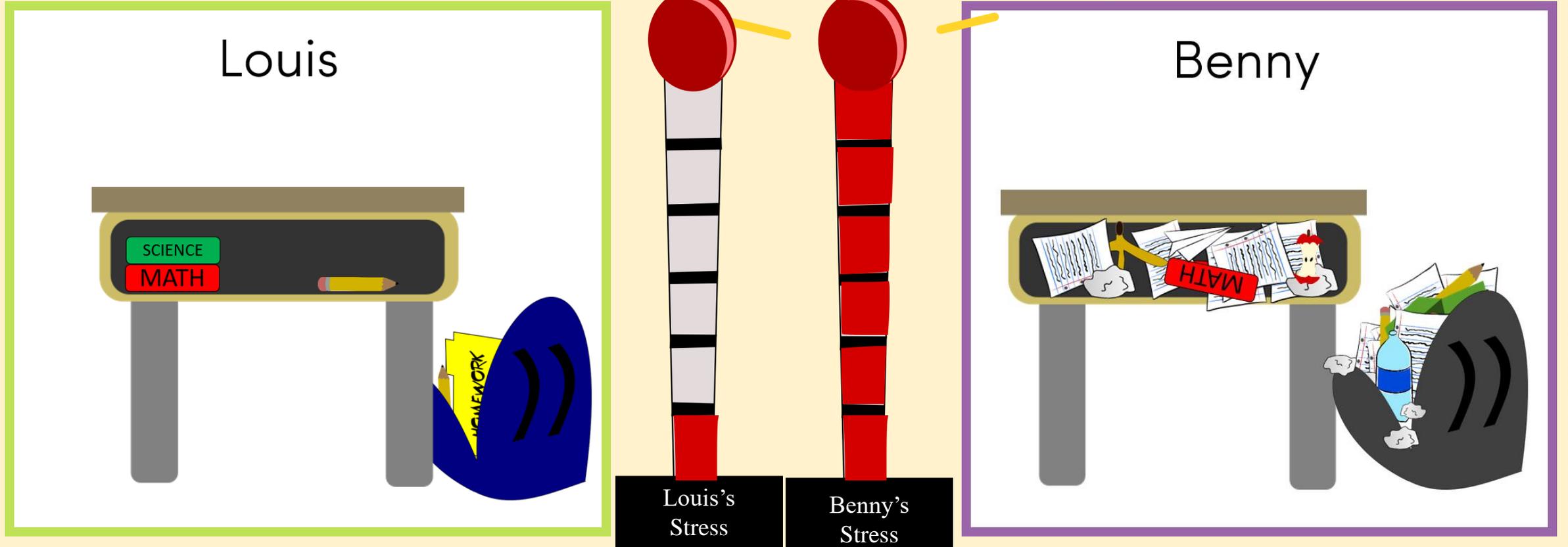
Louis



Benny



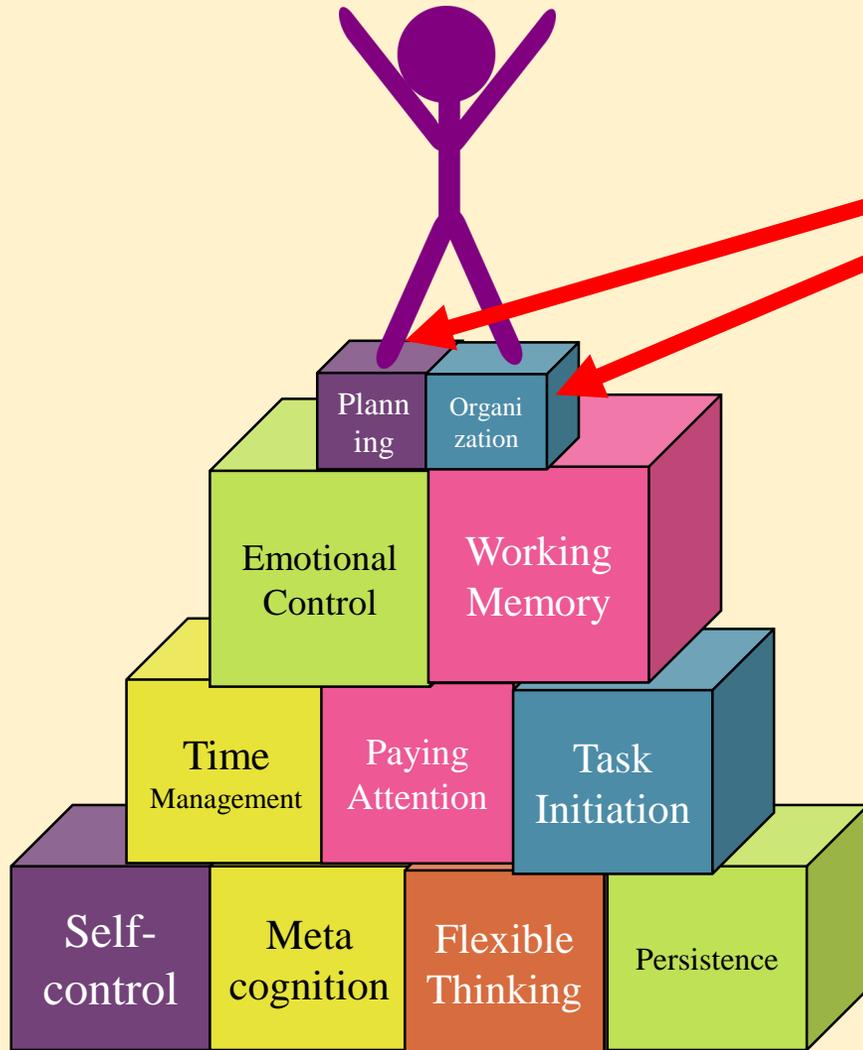
Who do you think was more stressed? Click your answer below.



Benny was more stressed and had a harder time focusing because he was disorganized.

GOAL

Benny does have strengths that can help him *get things done*, but he also has weaknesses in planning and organizing.



Does your desk ever get like this? Do you ever feel stressed or distracted because you aren't organized? If so, you might need to work on strengthening this area too. It will help you be happier, more successful, and better in school!



Let's learn some organizational skills that can help Benny *and* you!



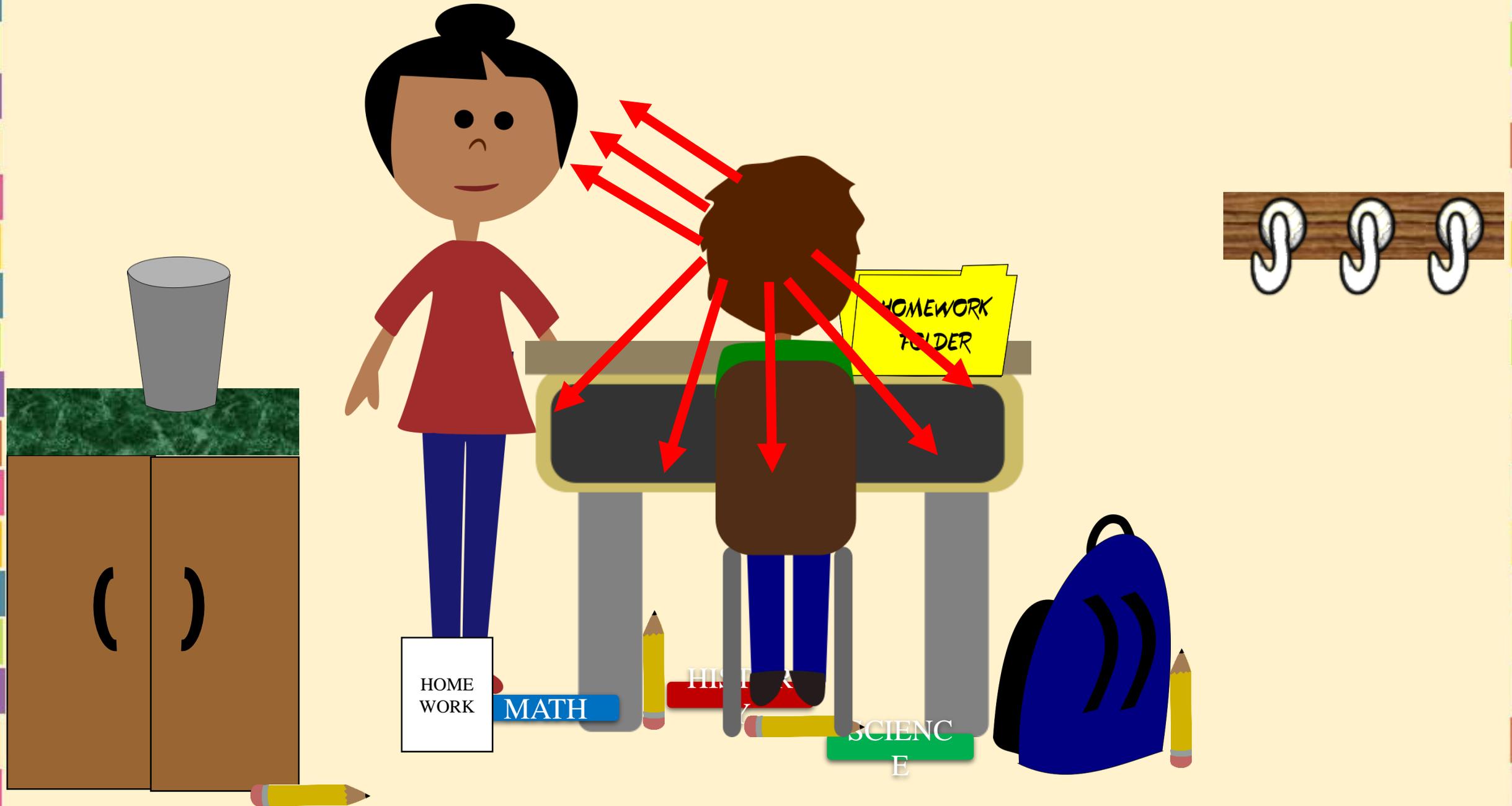
Tip #1

Give Everything a Place

One way to strengthen your organizational skills is to make sure that **everything has a place**.



When everything is in a specific spot, your brain can spend more time focusing on learning.

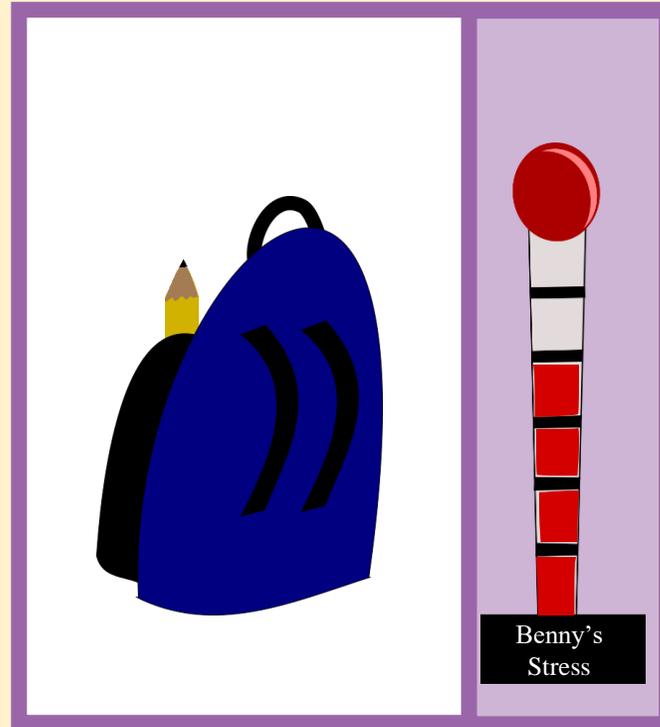


Benny has trouble putting things in **the place they belong**.

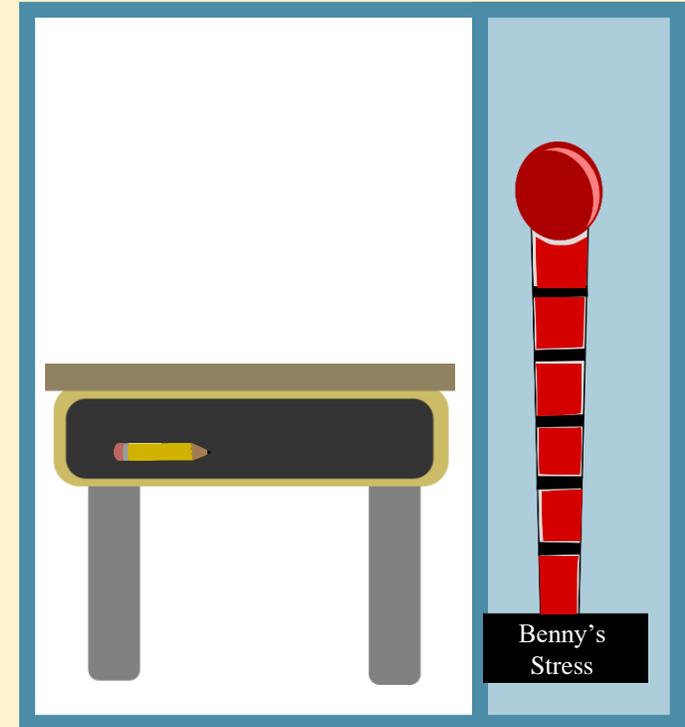
On **Monday**, he put his pencil in his coat pocket.



On **Tuesday**, he put his pencil in his backpack.

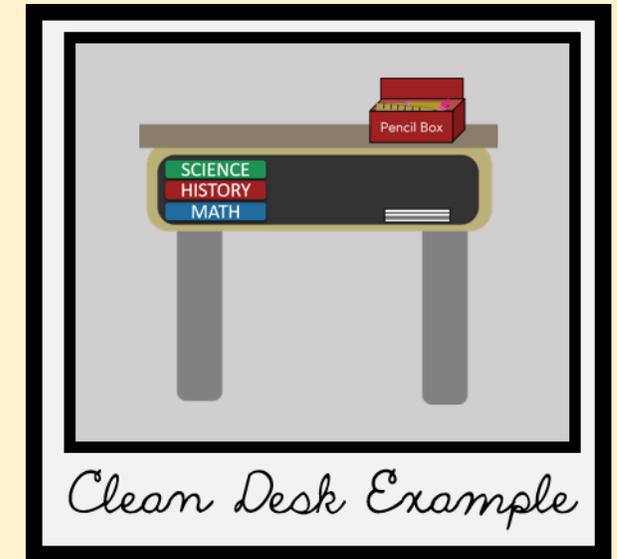
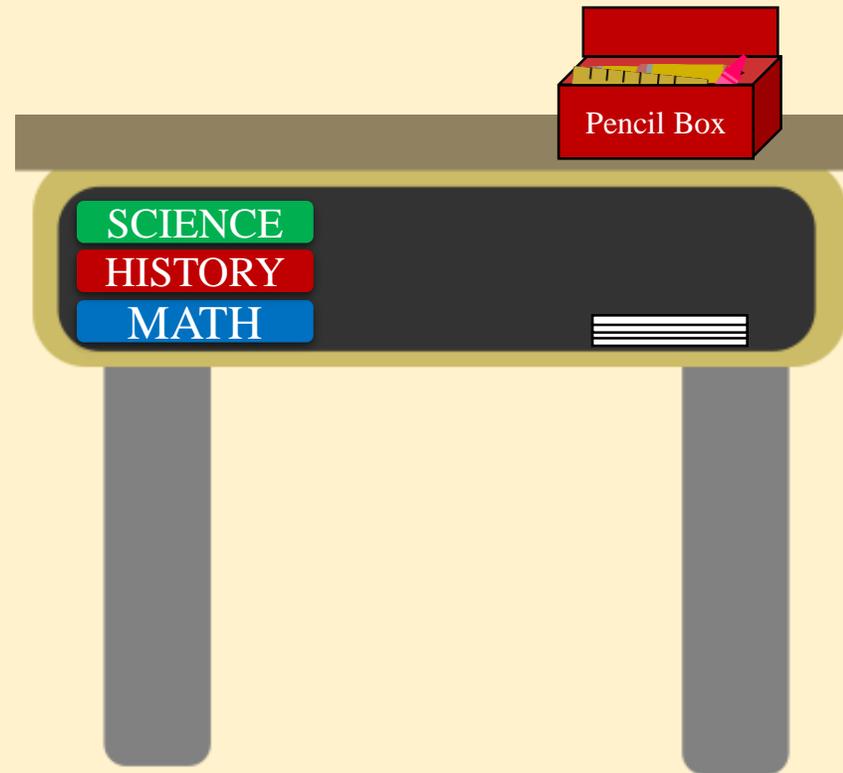


On **Wednesday**, he put his pencil in his desk.



Each time he needed his pencil, he had to check many different places.
His stress went up, and he lost time that he could have used listening to the teacher.

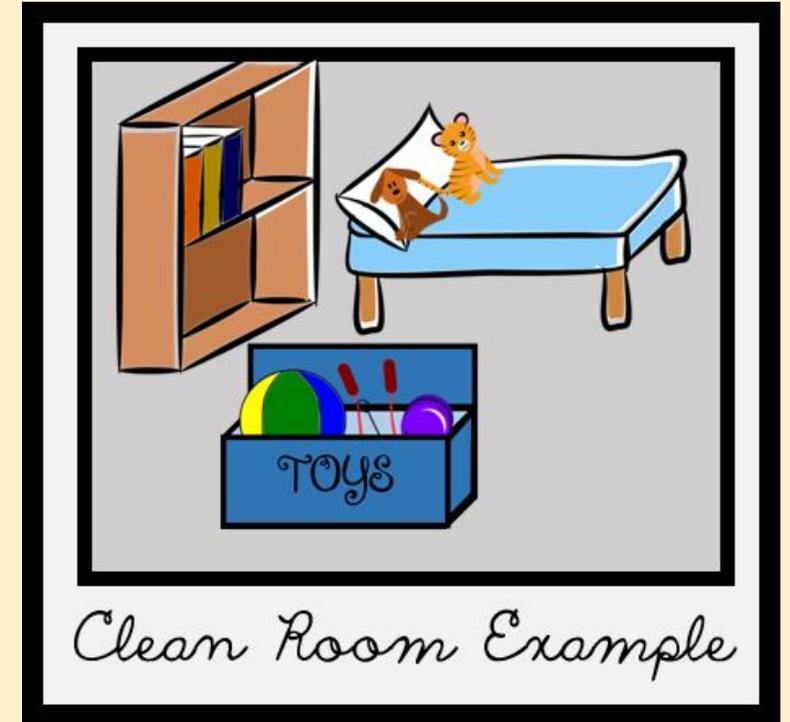
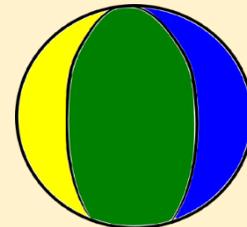
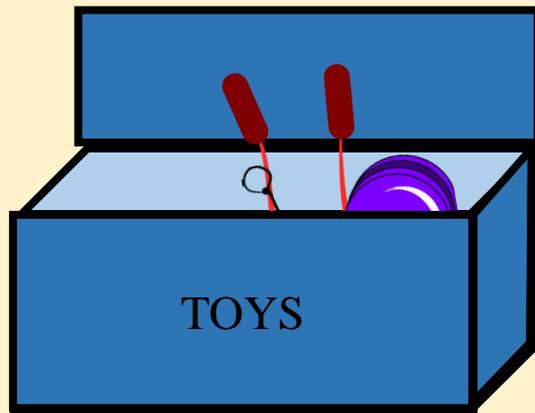
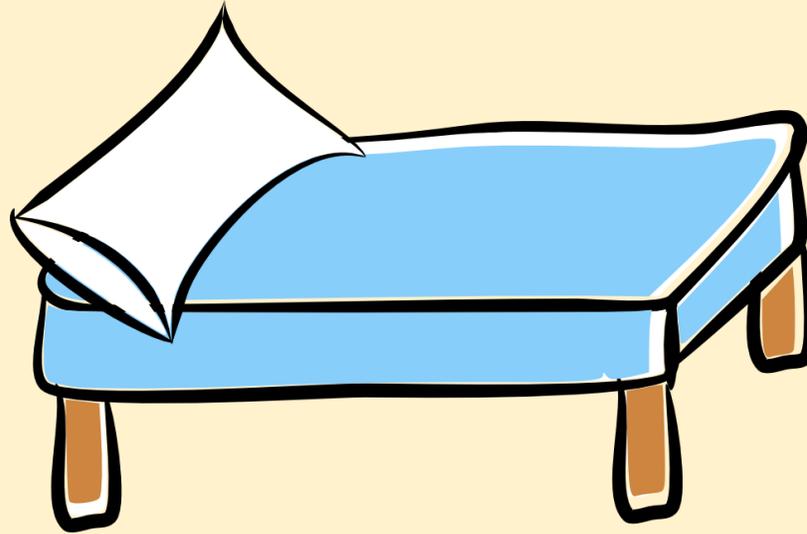
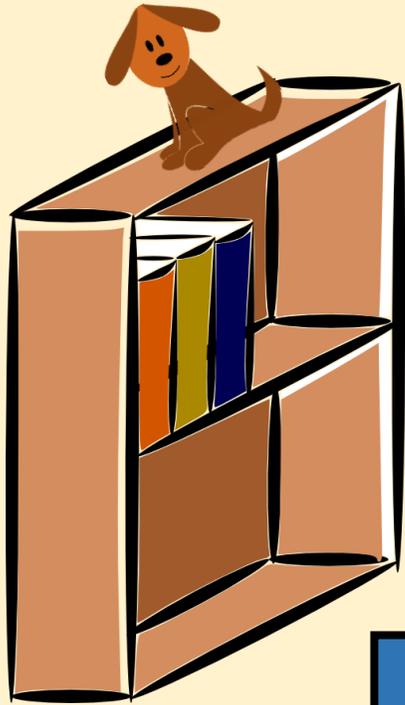
Benny works with his teacher to make sure **everything has a place**. They start with organizing his desk.



She helps him decide where to put his pencils, books, papers, and other things. Then they **take a picture** of the clean desk. This way if he forgets, he can just check the picture and see where things should go.

At home, his mom does the same thing to help him organize his room. When it gets messy, he can look at the picture to remind him where to put everything. Right now he needs to put away a couple things. **Click where you think the ball should go.**

Great job!

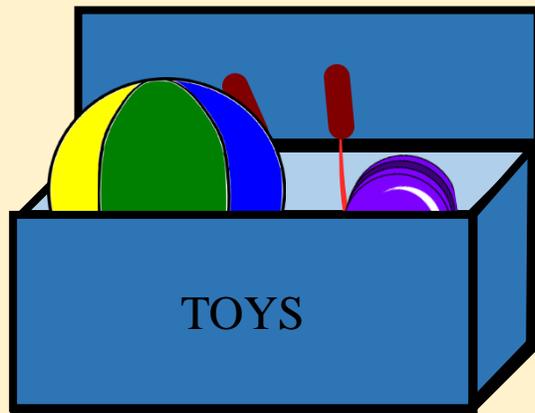
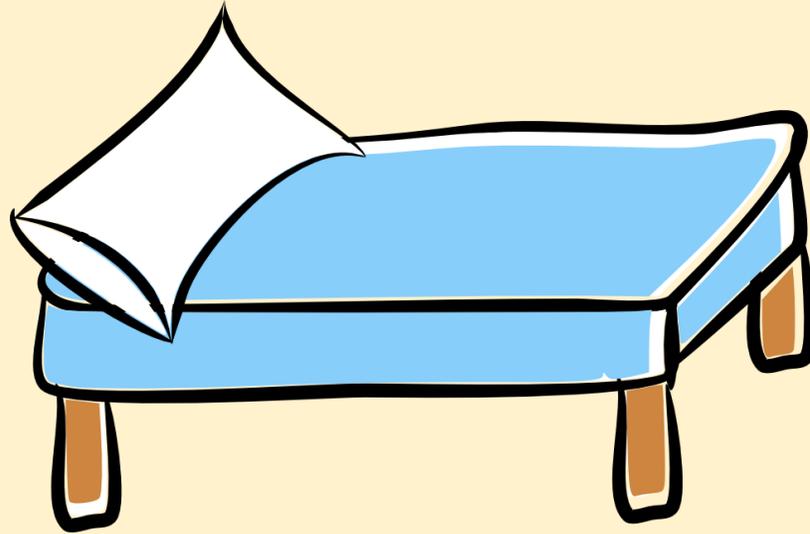


Clean Room Example

He just needs to put away his stuffed animals and then he'll be done.

Click where you think the stuffed animals should go.

That's right!



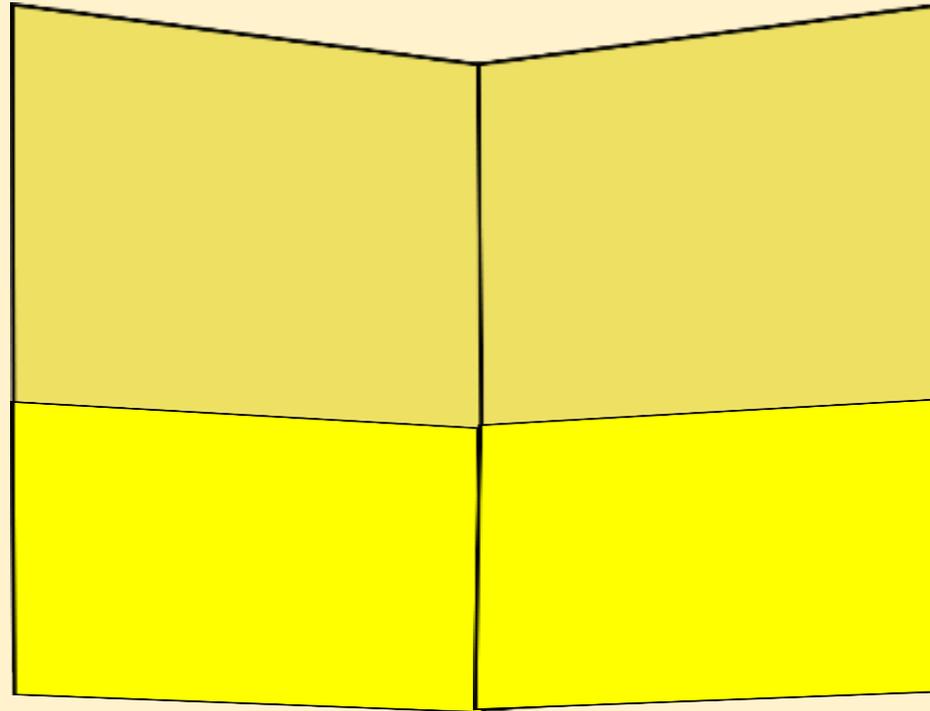
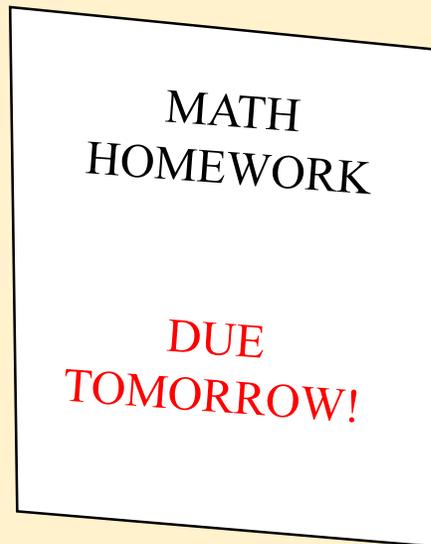
Clean Room Example

Benny cleans his desk but he still needs help deciding where his **homework** should go. He always just shoves it in his backpack and has trouble finding it and remembering what homework he needs to do each night.

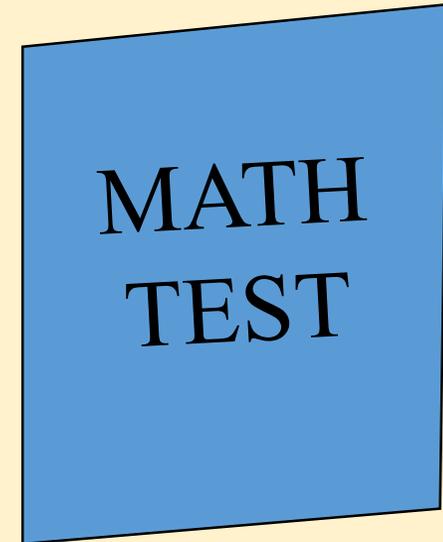


His teacher helps him create a simple system to keep track of his **homework**.
She gives him a homework folder with two sides.

On one side, he puts homework and papers that **need to be finished** and brought back to school.

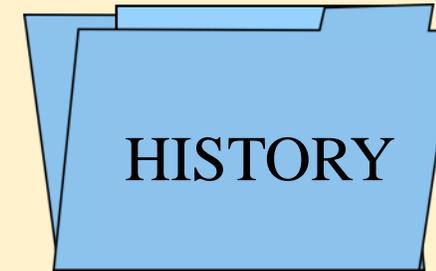
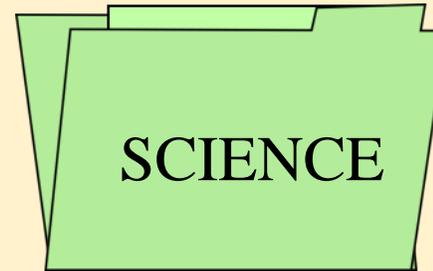
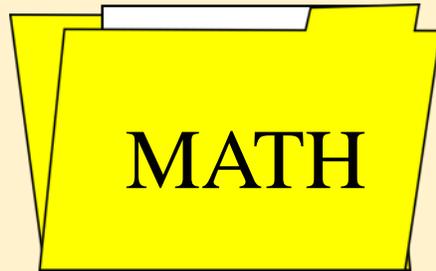


On the other side he puts papers that can **stay home**.



At the end of the day, the teacher has Louis check Benny's homework folder to make sure everything is in the right spot, and Benny checks Louis's folder.

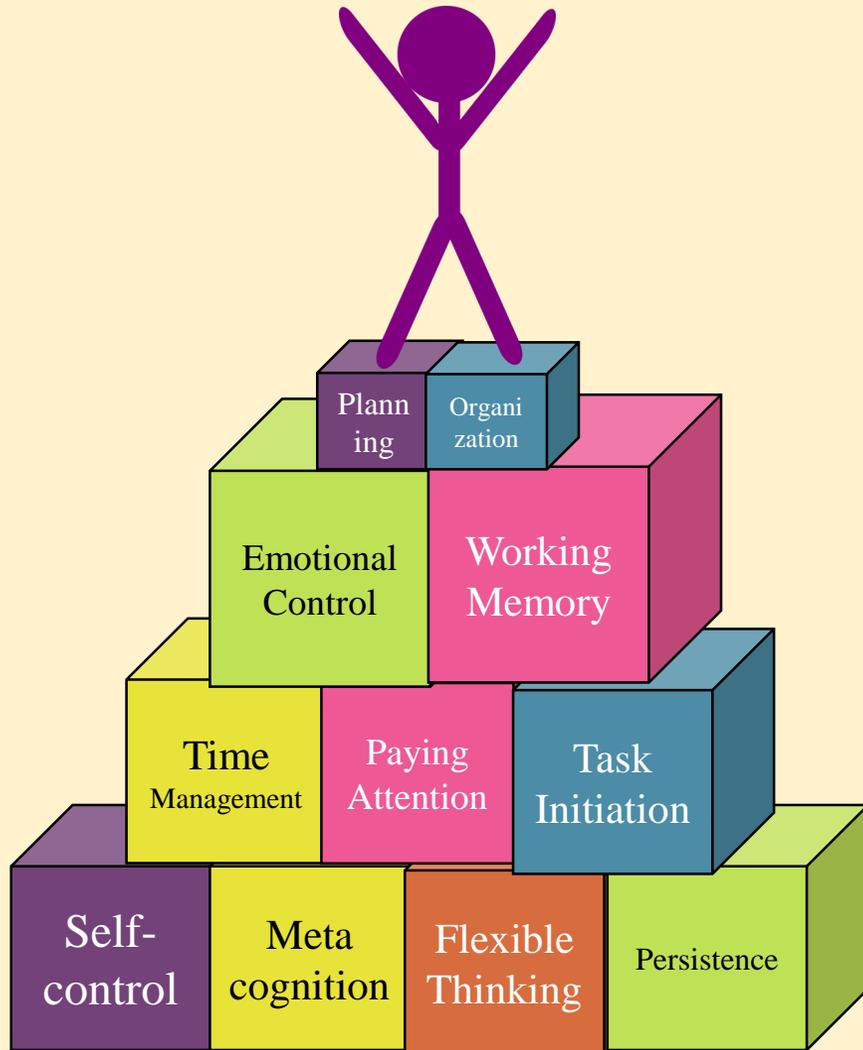
This is just one system you can use for homework. Benny's brother is in middle school and has more subjects. He has a different colored folder for each subject.



- What system do *you* use for keeping track of homework?
- Where do you put your homework? How do you remember what to turn in?
- Do you have someone check to see if your homework is in the right place before leaving each day?
- Do you think you need to change your system to be more organized, or is it working well?

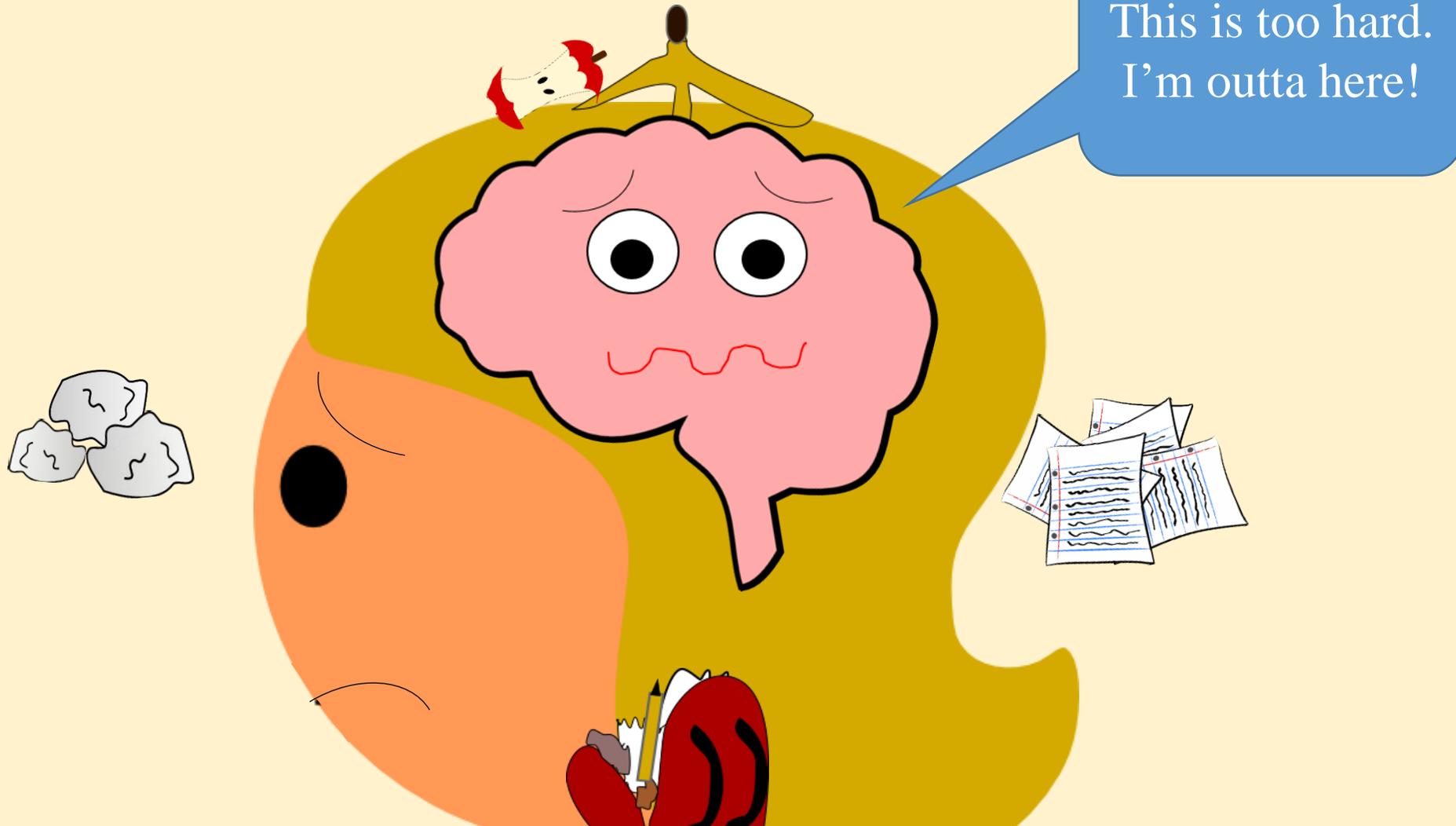
GOAL

Benny's planning and organizing blocks are getting strengthened by **giving everything a place** and using a homework system!

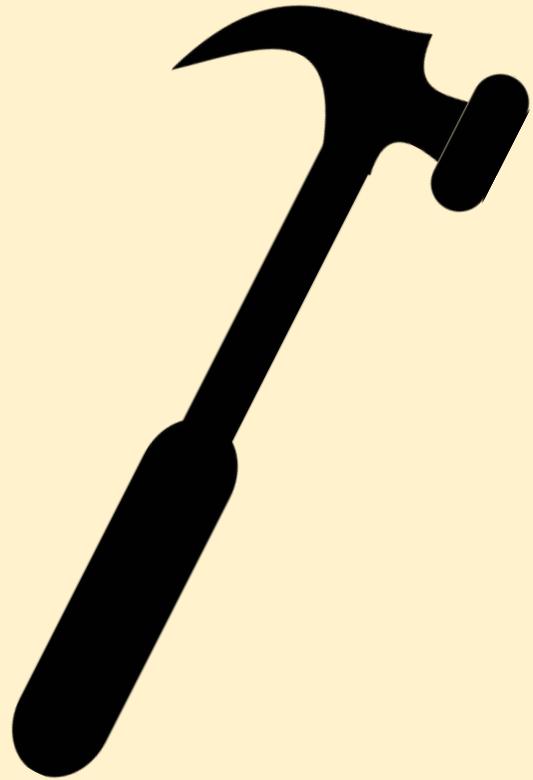


Tip #2 Use Routines and Checklists

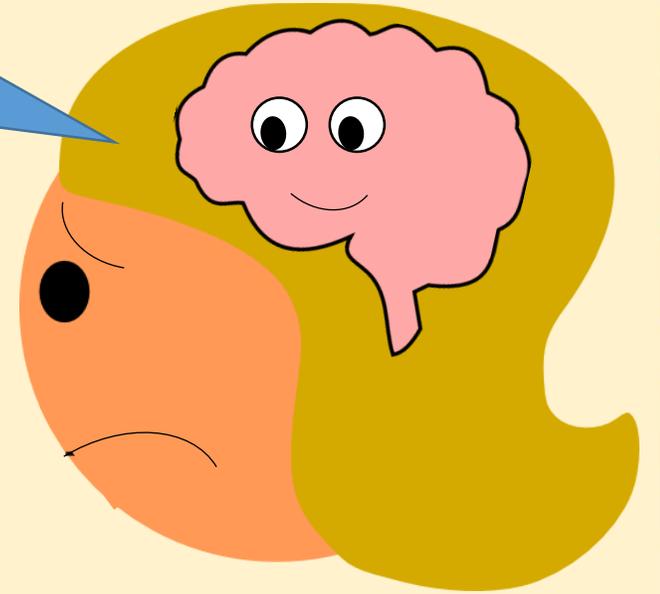
Sometimes even when **everything has a place** and you know where it goes, it's overwhelming to start.



The key is to take a big, overwhelming task and break it down into smaller parts.



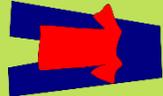
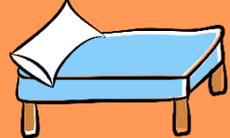
That doesn't look so bad! I can do that.



One way to do this is to create routines and checklists.

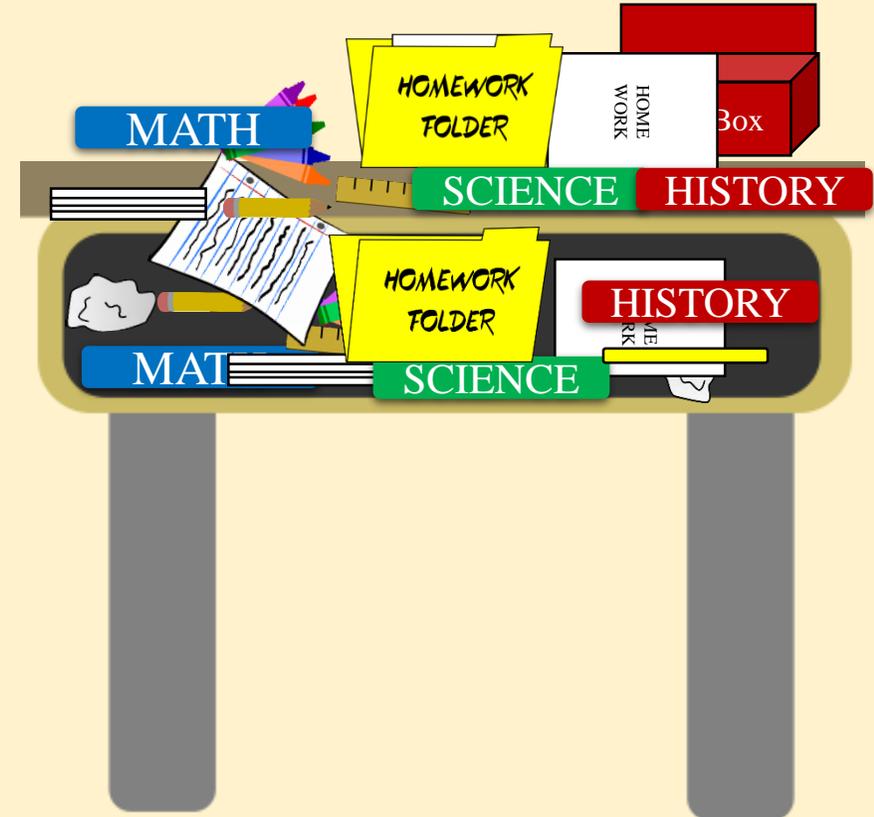
A **routine** is something you do often in a similar order. Instead of having a big task like “**get ready for bed**” you break it down into small parts like brushing your teeth, getting your pajamas on, laying out clothes, and getting into bed.

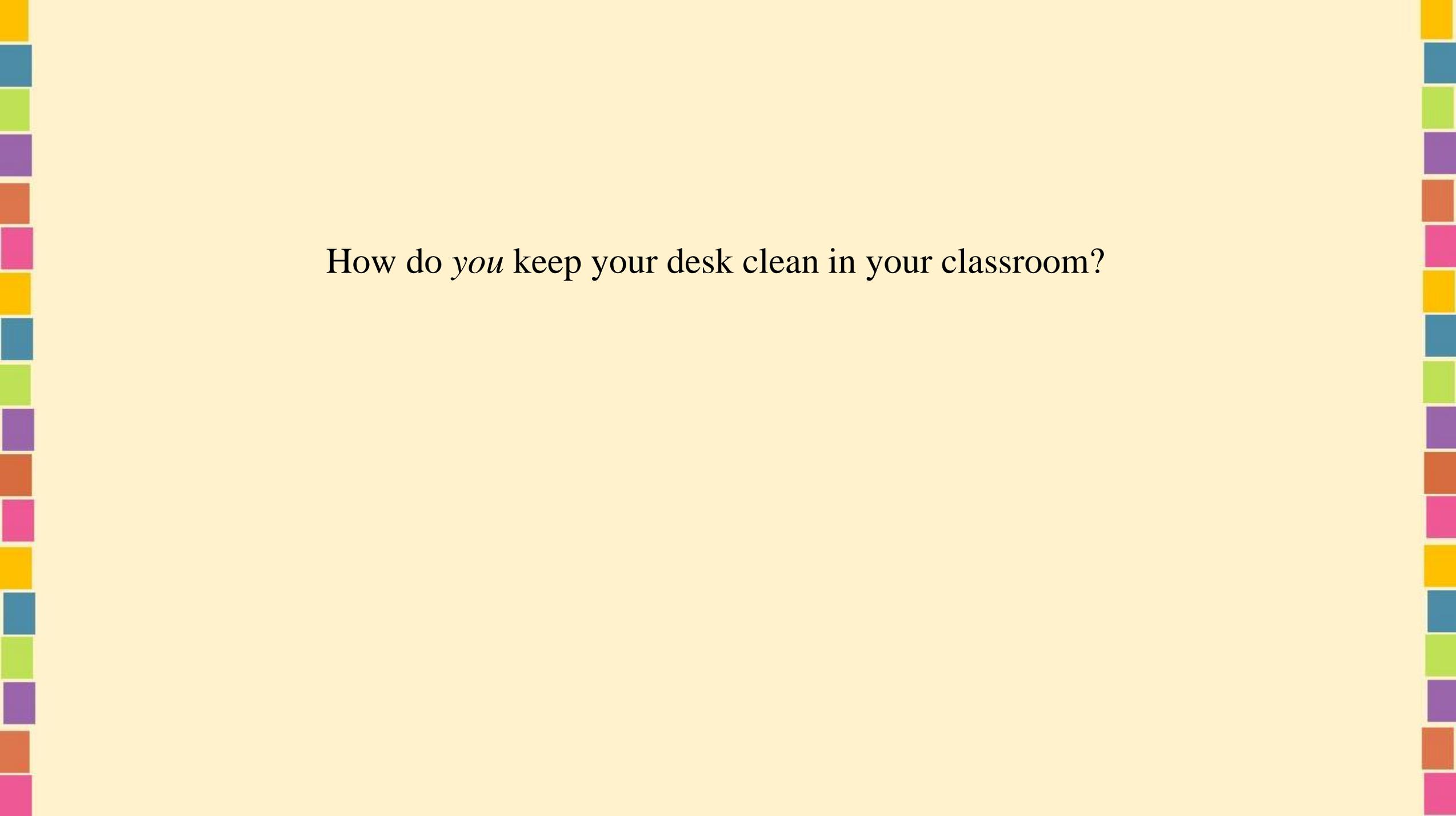
A **checklist** is a visual aid that can help you remember a routine if it’s long or you’re just beginning.

1 st	Brush your teeth 	✓
2 nd	Get pajamas on 	✓
3 rd	Lay out clothes for next day 	✓
4 th	Get in bed 	✓

Benny's teacher helps him create a **routine** to clean his desk.
Together they decide where to start, and then they write each step on a **checklist**.
When he finishes a step, he checks it off.

1 st	First, take everything out and put it on top of the desk.	✓
2 nd	Throw away any trash.	✓
3 rd	Put homework neatly in folder to take home.	✓
4 th	Put all pencils, crayons, and supplies in pencil box.	✓
5 th	Stack books on left side and folders and papers on right side.	✓



A decorative vertical bar on the left and right sides of the page, consisting of a sequence of colored squares: yellow, blue, light green, purple, brown, pink, yellow, blue, light green, purple, brown, pink, yellow, blue, light green, purple, brown, pink, yellow, blue, light green, purple, brown, pink.

How do *you* keep your desk clean in your classroom?

Benny uses checklists and routines throughout the day.

He has a routine and checklist before he **goes home**.

Going Home Checklist	
	✓
	✓
	✓
	✓

He has a checklist to **clean his room**.

Clean Room Checklist	
	✓
	✓
	✓
	✓

He has a checklist to make sure he has everything in his **backpack** for the next day.

Backpack Checklist	
	✓
	✓
	✓
	✓

Pretty soon, Benny doesn't need to look at his checklists to remember what to do anymore.

At first it might be hard to remember a routine, but
the more you do it, the easier it gets!

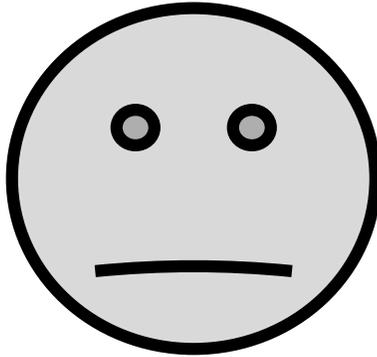
1st time

Backpack Checklist	
_____	✓
_____	✓
_____	✓
_____	✓



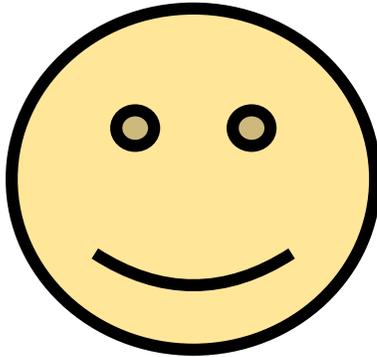
2nd time

Backpack Checklist	
_____	✓
_____	✓
_____	✓
_____	✓



3rd time

Backpack Checklist	
_____	✓
_____	✓
_____	✓
_____	✓



Let's practice doing a routine a few times so you can see how it gets easier after a while!

Below is a practice routine we'll do for fun. Go through each of the steps to practice it. Once you've practiced, click on the challenges below starting with #1 to see how well you can remember the routine with some steps missing.

Routine		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

CHALLENGE #1

CHALLENGE #2

CHALLENGE #3



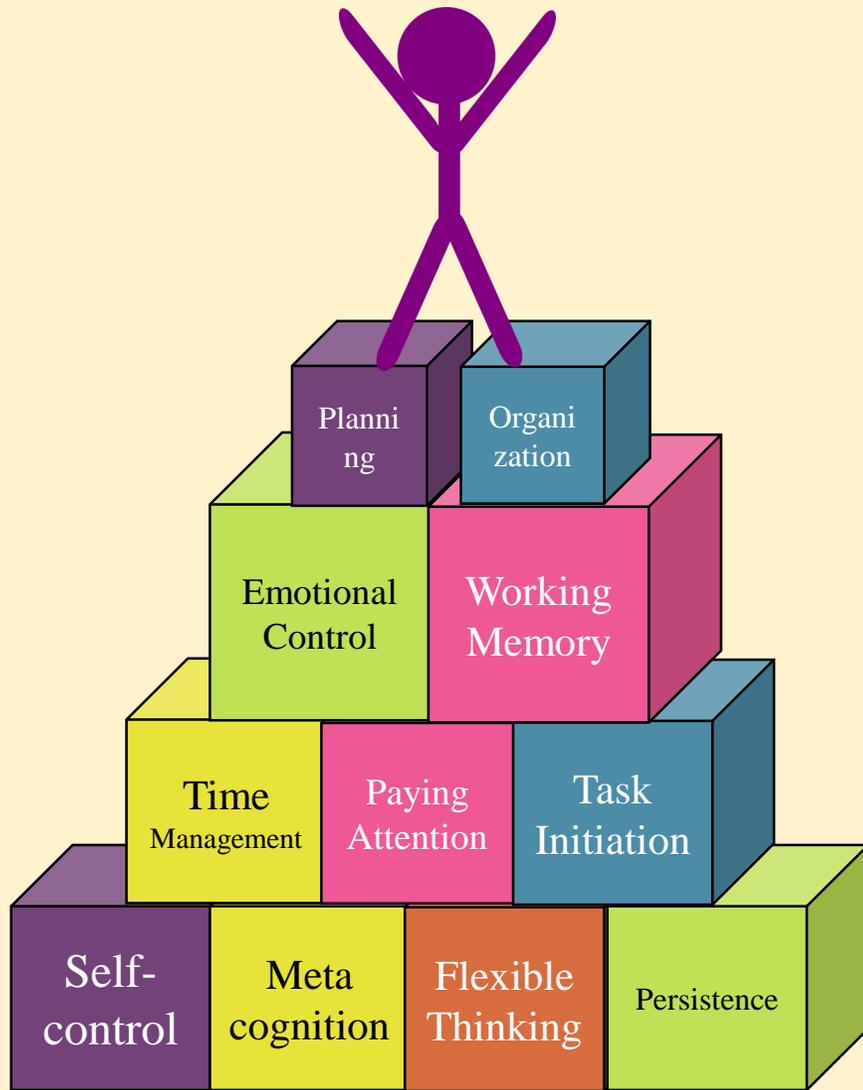
Do you have any routines or checklists in your classroom?

What could you create a checklist for to help you be more organized and less overwhelmed at school or at home?

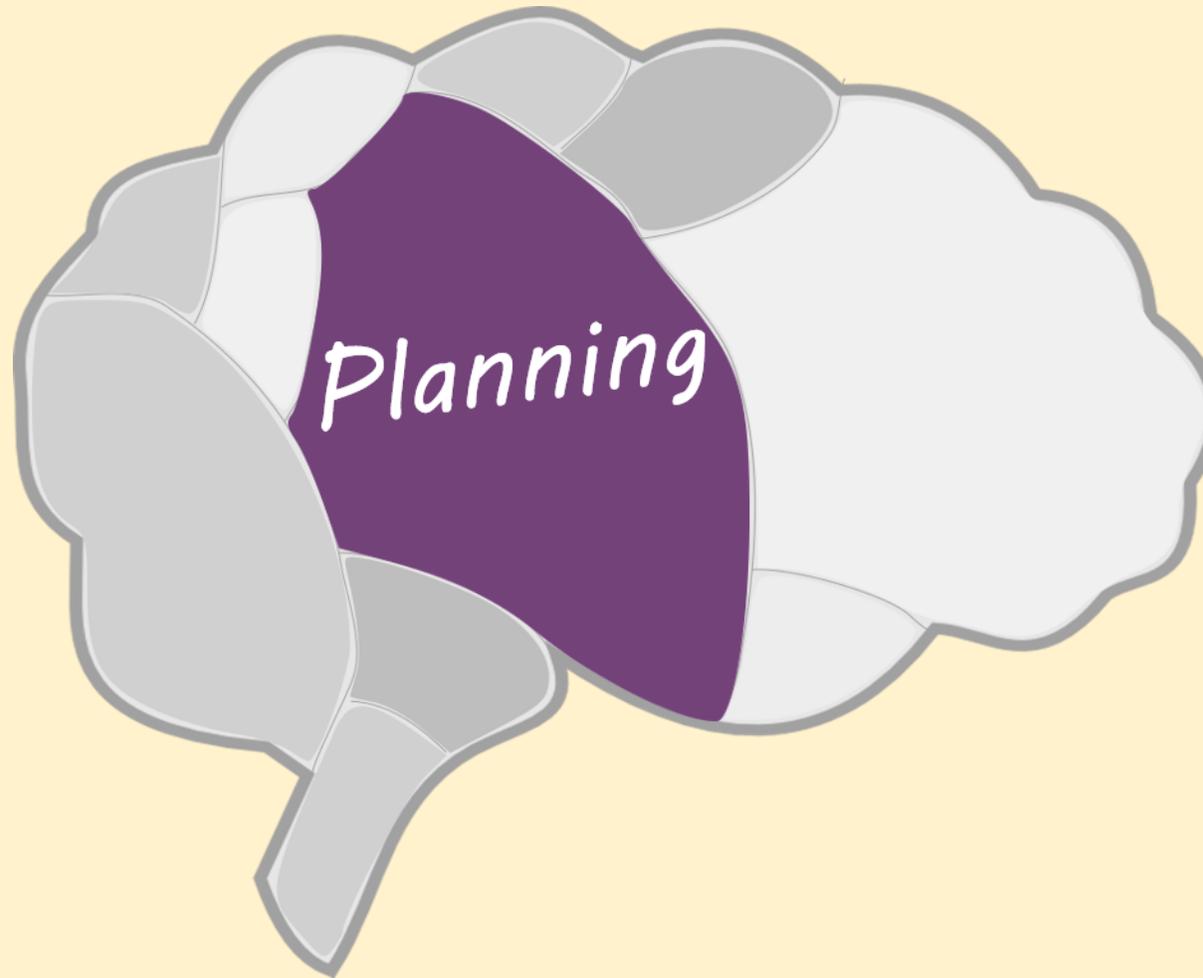


GOAL

Benny's planning and organizing blocks are getting strengthened by using routines and checklists!



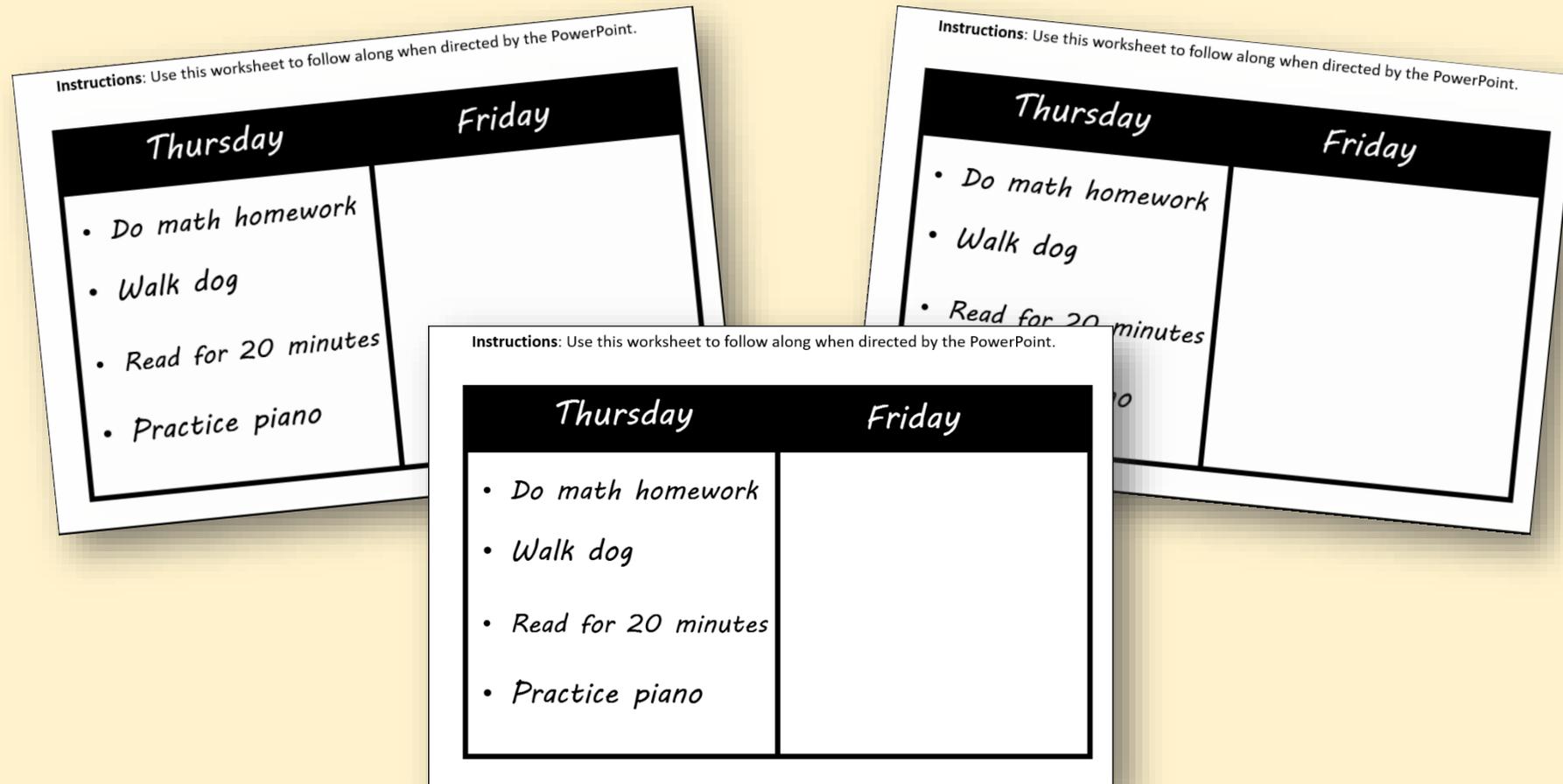
Now we'll learn about another **executive function** called planning.



Planning is another part of your brain that helps you **get things done**.

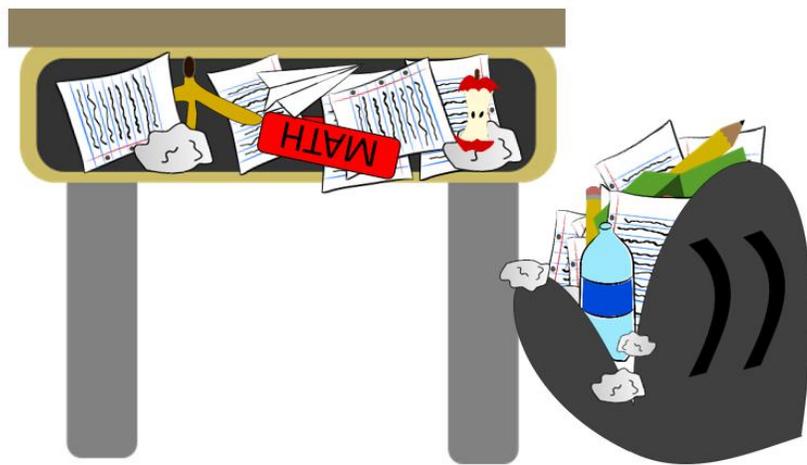
Reminder:

Please pass out this worksheet to each student before presenting this section.



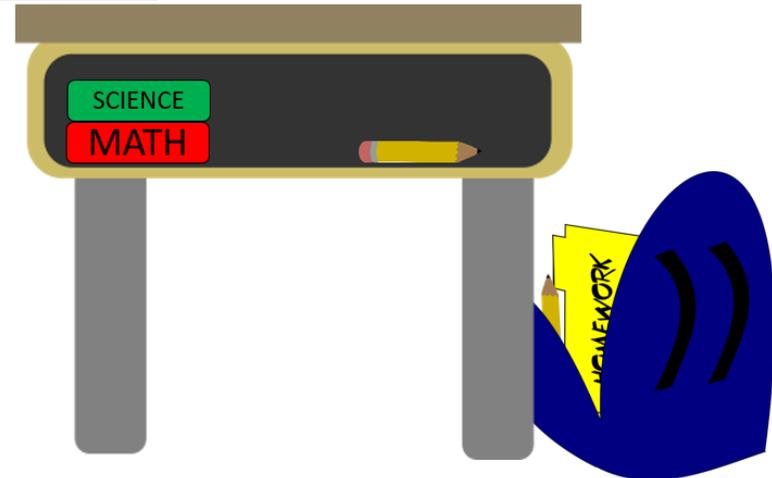
Benny used to be very disorganized, but now he has a **place for everything** and he uses routines and checklists.

Before

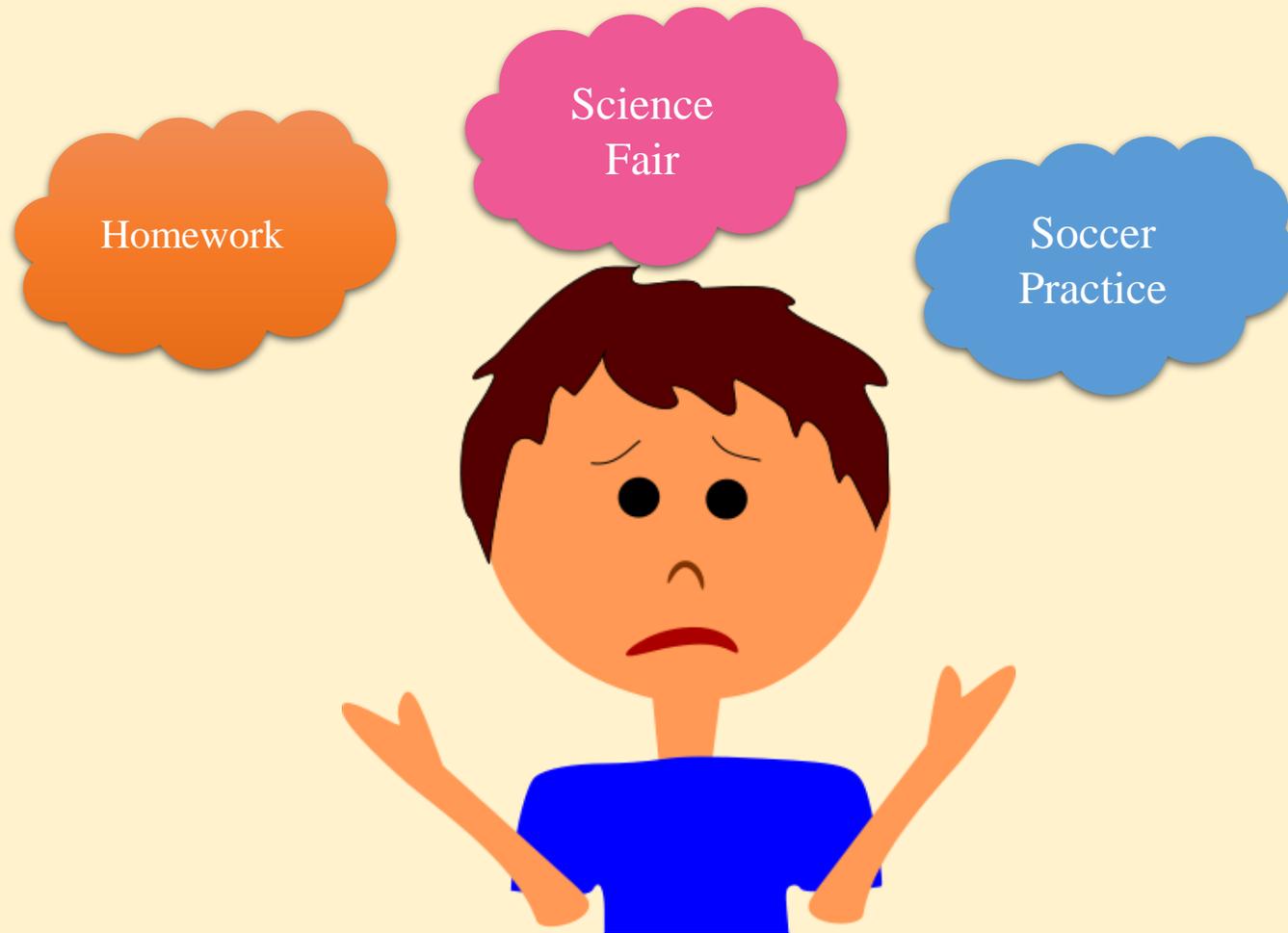


After

Backpack Checklist	
_____	✓
_____	✓
_____	✓
_____	✓



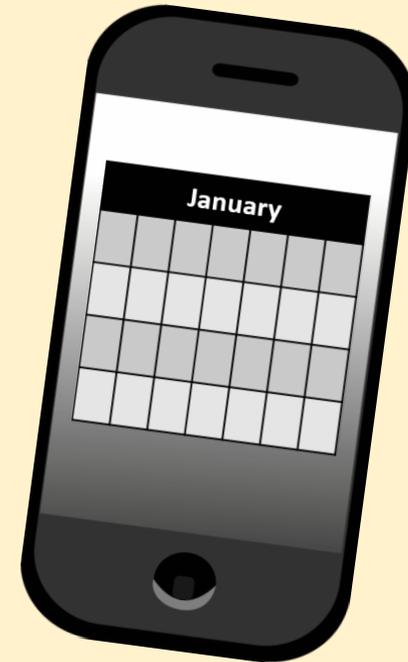
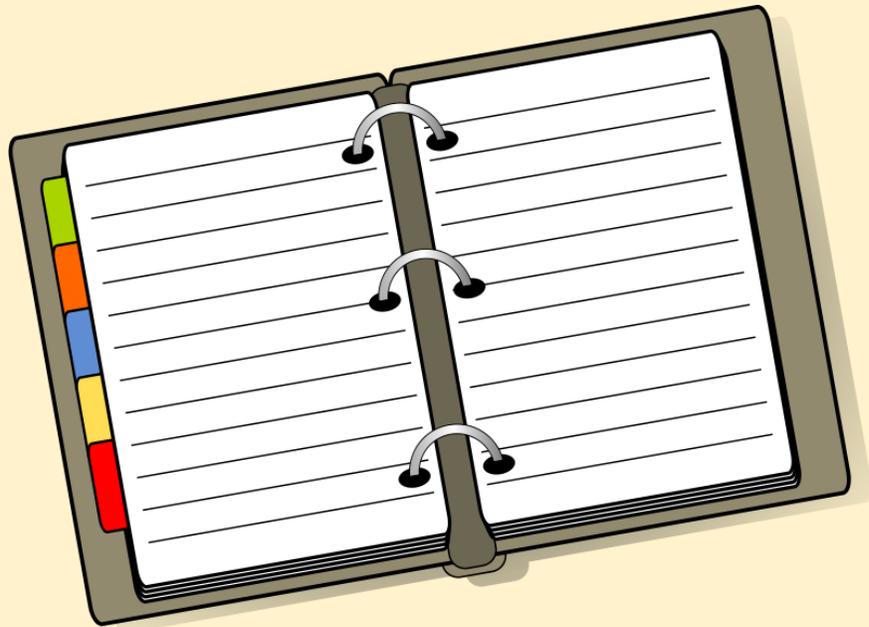
Even with the new skills he's learning, he still has trouble with things like remembering what homework is due, when he needs to be different places, and deciding how to plan out big projects like the science fair coming up.



Benny could benefit from using a **planner**.

Do you know what a **planner** is?

It's a place to plan out and write down what you need to do.



Tip #3

Make To-Do Lists

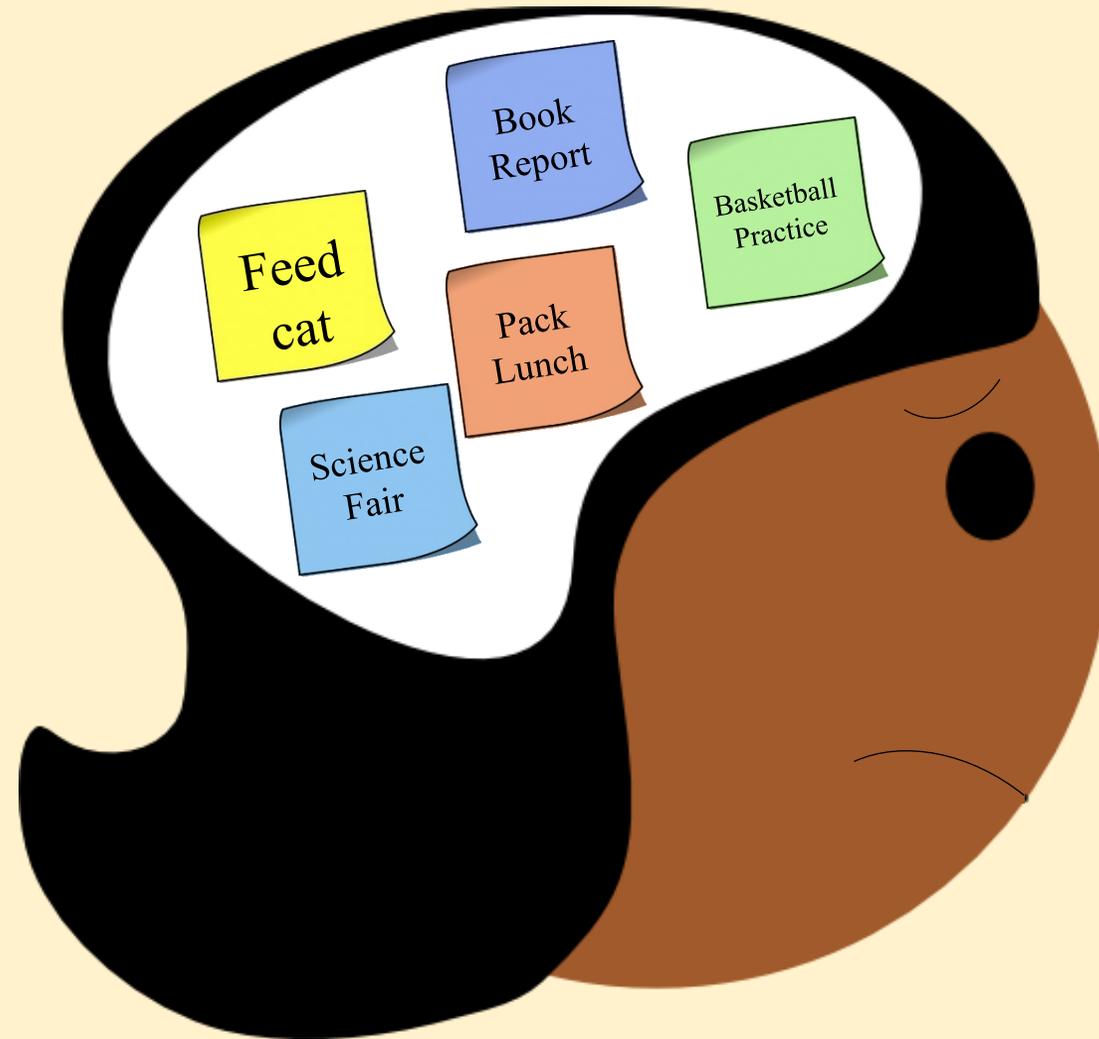
One part of a good **planner** is a **to-do list**.



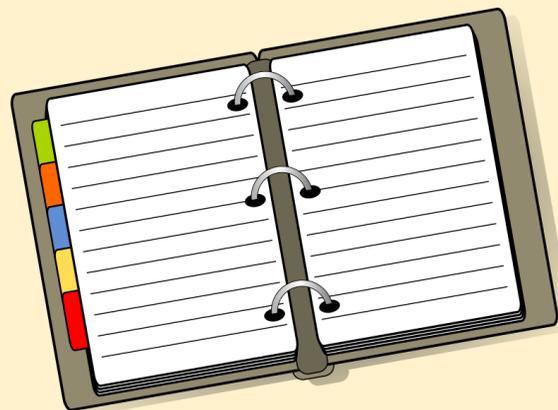
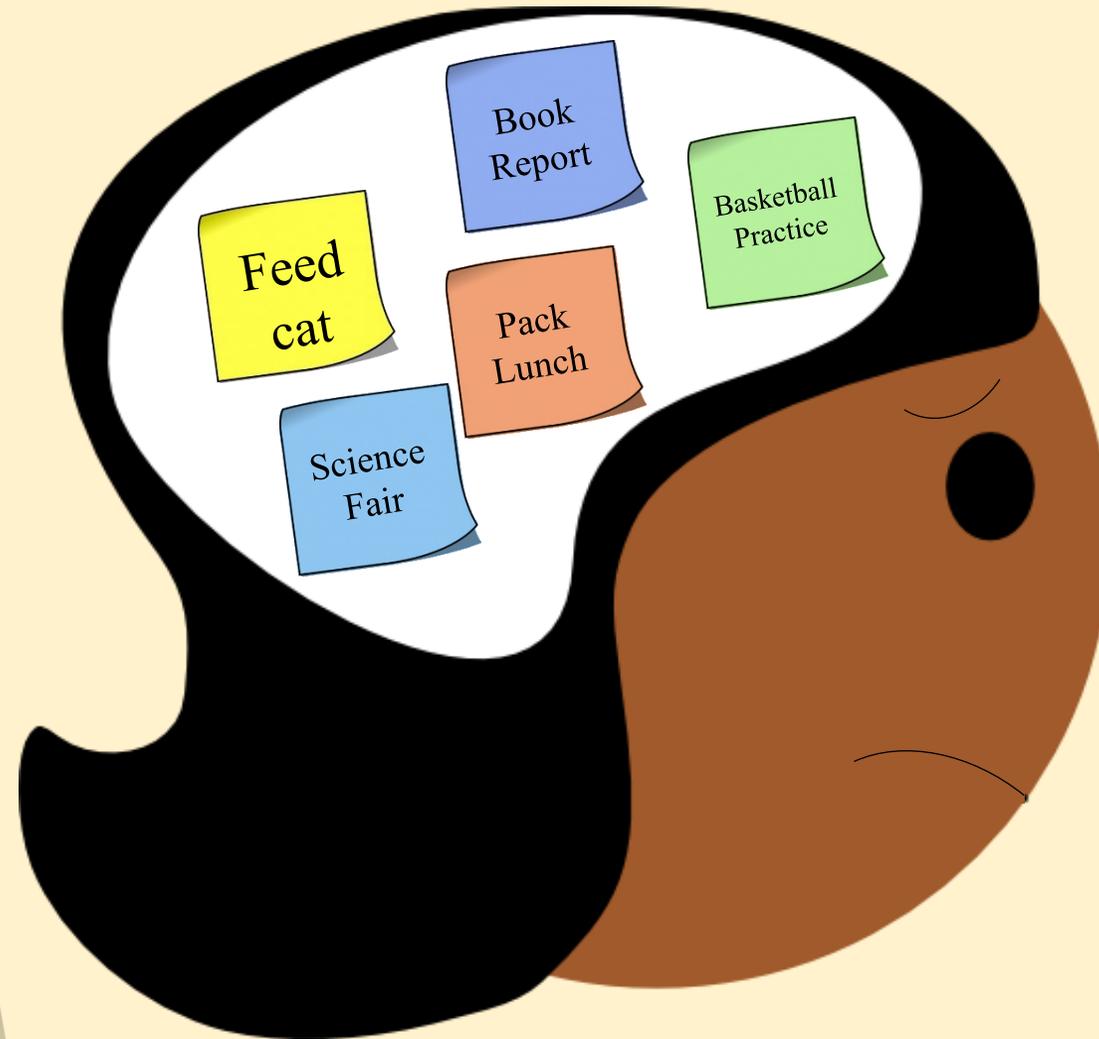
Do you know what a **to-do list** is?

It's a list of things that you have **to do**!

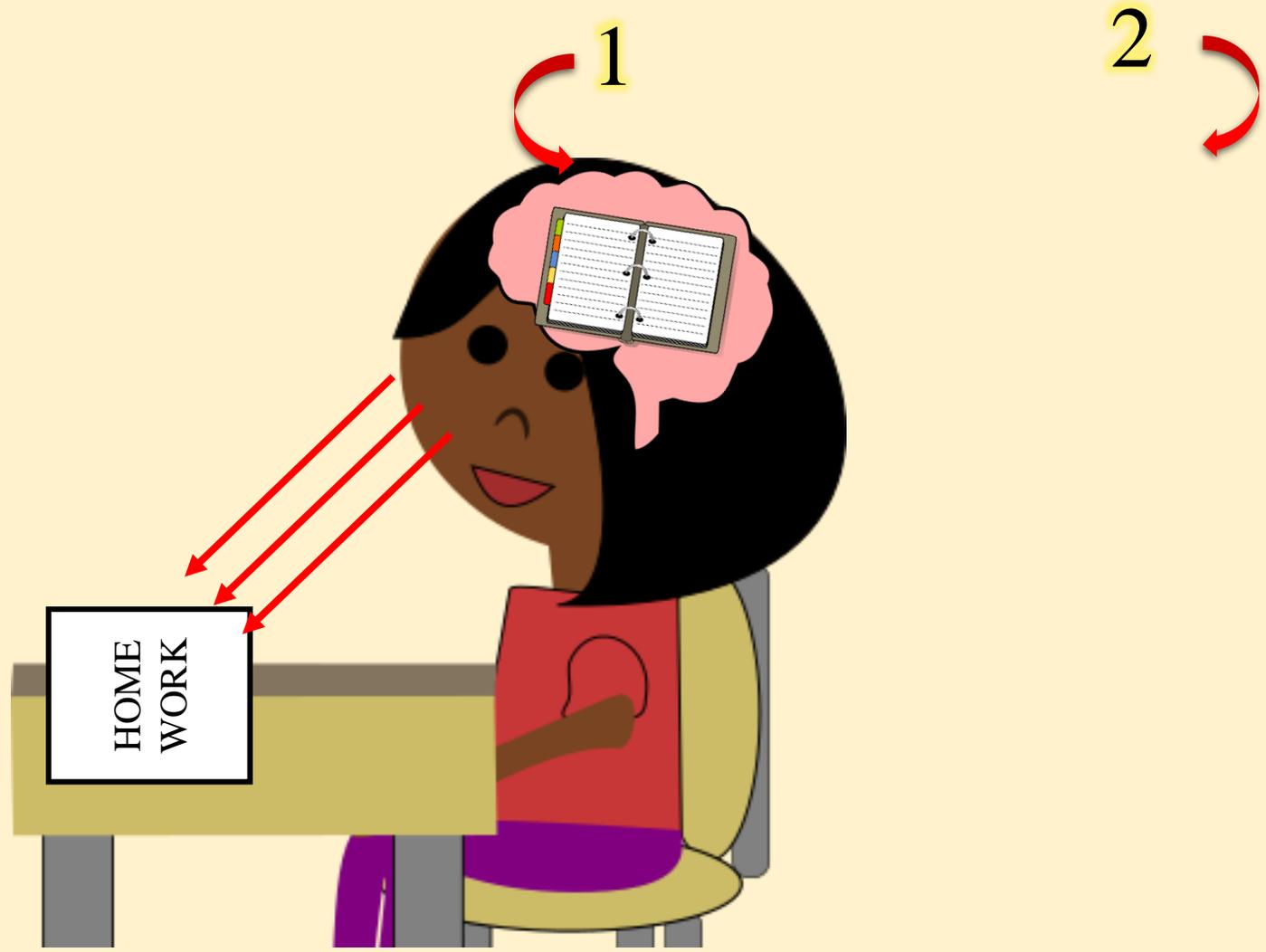
When you have a lot to do and you try to remember it all in your head, it takes up a lot of brain power.



By writing something down on a **to-do list**, you free up brain space so you can focus!



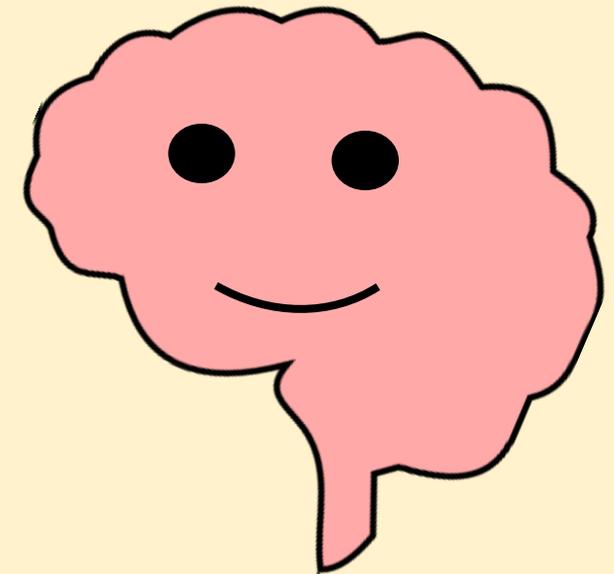
A **to-do list** is like an extension of your brain. It's like you have an **extra** brain to store information, so your actual brain can focus on other things.



After you finish something on your **to-do list** , cross it off!

Monday	Tuesday
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walk dog• Do science homework	

Nice!



This will make your brain happy. Your brain *loves* knowing it's *getting things done*.

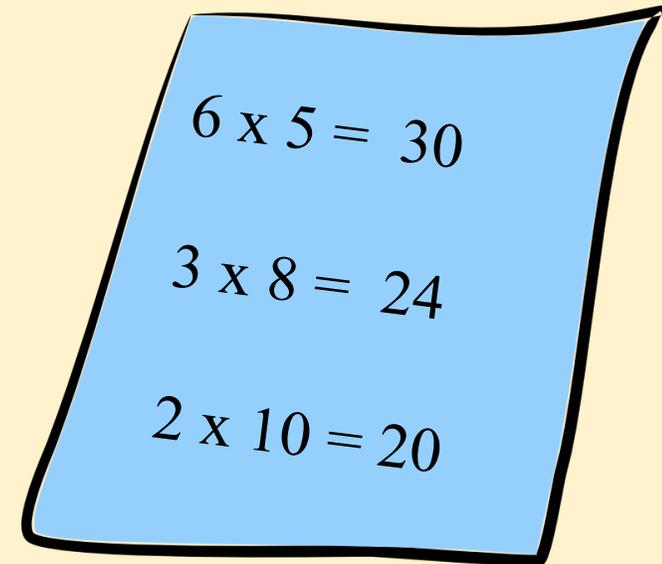
Benny wants to free up some brain space, so he writes down the things he needs to do in his planner. It's **Thursday**, so that's where he writes them.

Thursday	Friday
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do math homework• Walk dog• Read for 20 minutes• Practice piano	

Benny is going to go through his **to-do list** when he gets home.
If you have a copy of his list, then follow along!

When Benny gets home he looks at his list and finishes his math homework.
What should he do before going on to the next thing?

Thursday	Friday
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do math homework• Walk dog• Read for 20 minutes• Practice piano	



He needs to cross it off! If you have a copy of the list, **cross it off on your paper.**

He checks the next thing on his list, and goes out to walk the dog.
What should he do when he gets back?

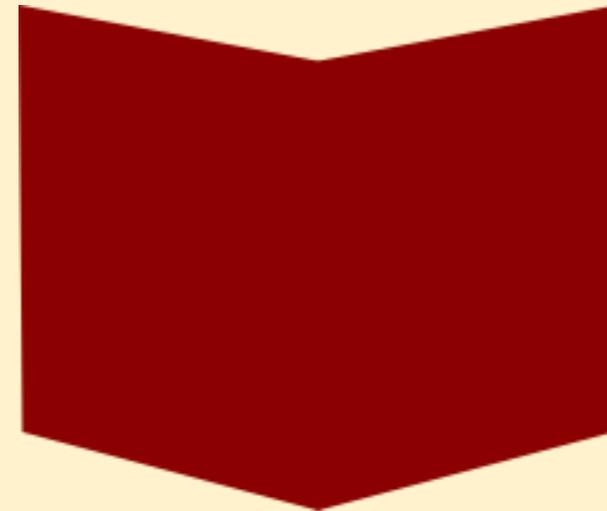
Thursday	Friday
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do math homework• Walk dog• Read for 20 minutes• Practice piano	



He'll cross it off! **Cross it off on your paper too.**

What does he need to do next?

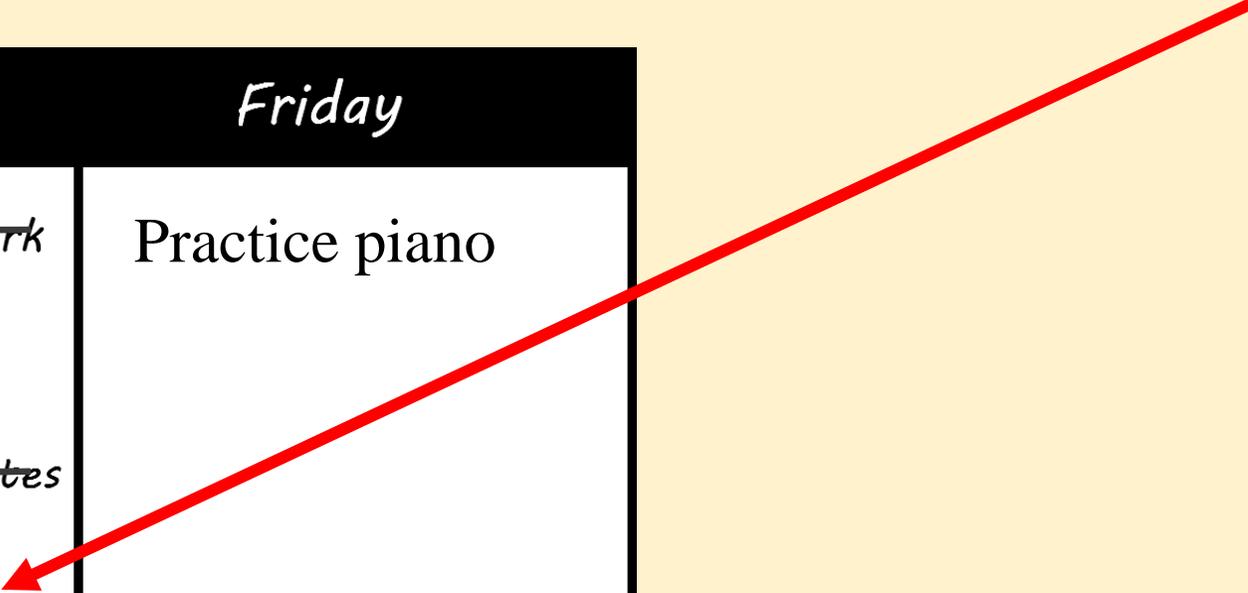
Thursday	Friday
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do math homework• Walk dog• Read for 20 minutes• Practice piano	



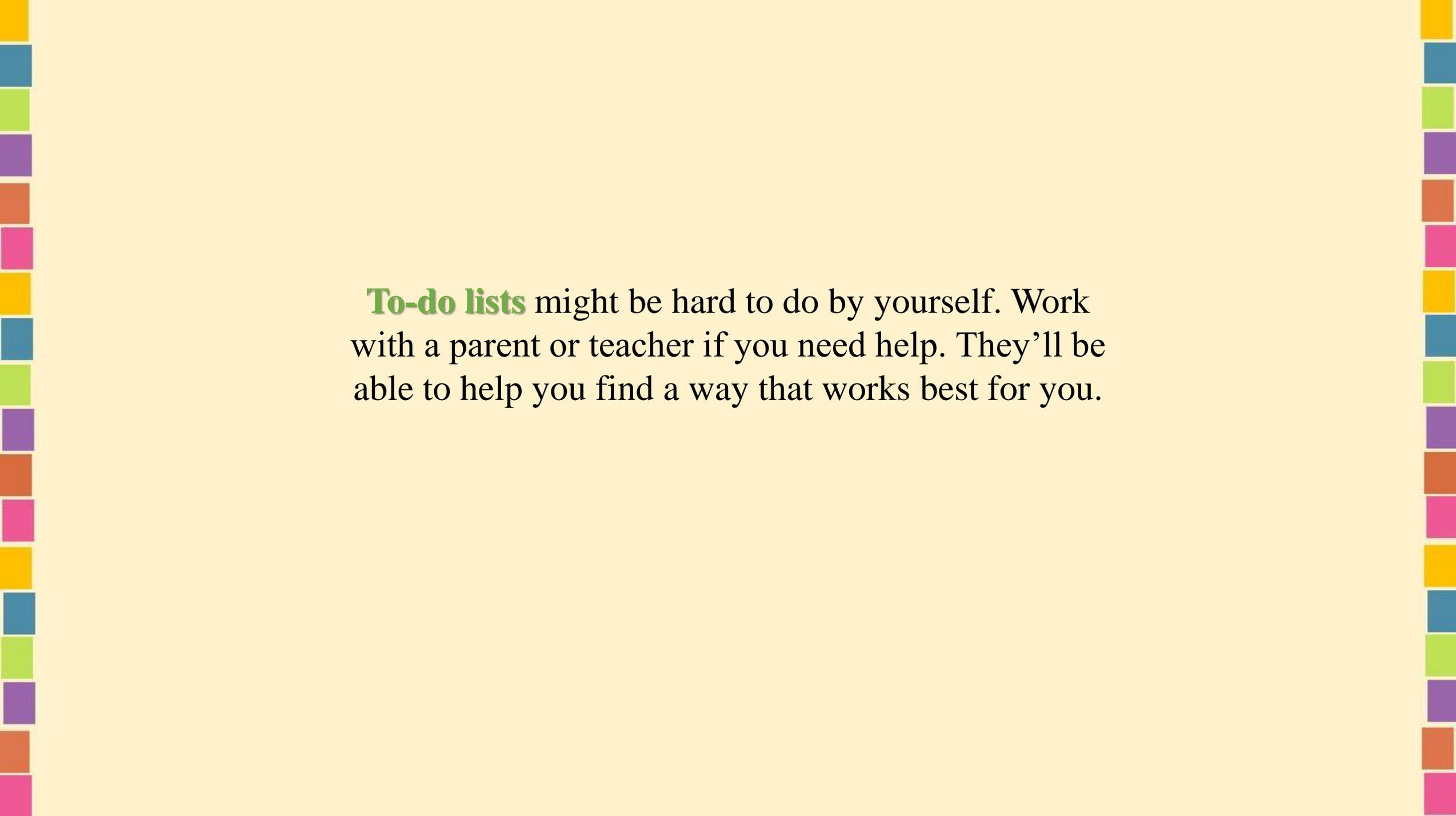
He needs to read for 20 minutes! After he finishes, he crosses it off.
Do the same **on your paper**.

Benny has some unexpected things to do and can't finish his piano practice.
What do you think he should do with this last item on his checklist that he didn't finish?

<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Do math homework</i>• <i>walk dog</i>• <i>Read for 20 minutes</i>• <i>Practice piano</i>	Practice piano



He could write it on the next day. If you ever don't finish a task on your list, make sure you re-write it for another time. Write **“Practice piano”** on your paper under **“Friday.”**



To-do lists might be hard to do by yourself. Work with a parent or teacher if you need help. They'll be able to help you find a way that works best for you.

Tip #4

Break Apart Tasks

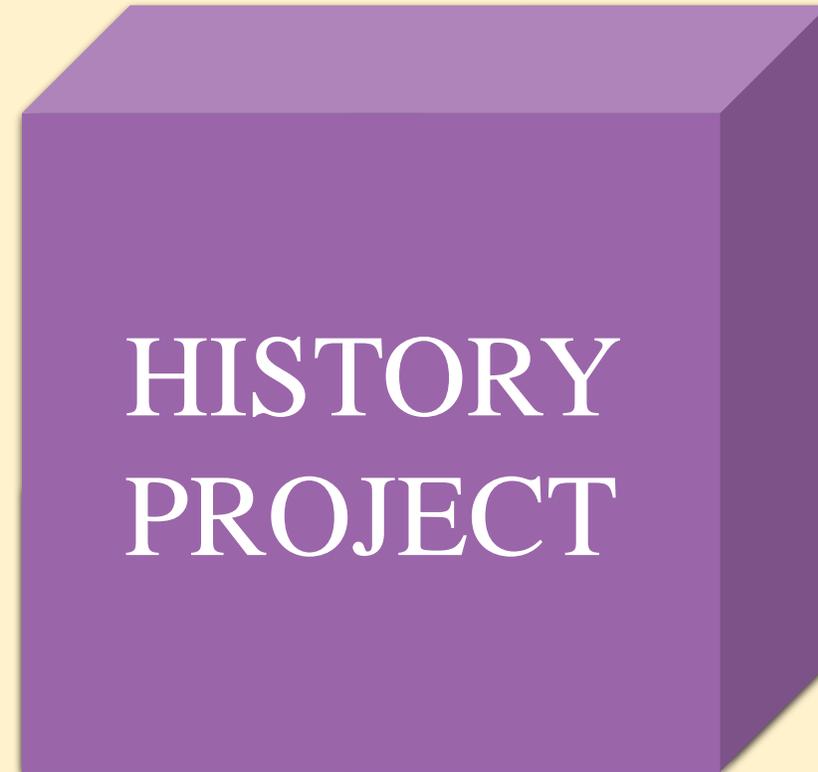
If you have a big task on your to-do list, it's a good idea to break it down into smaller tasks and write each separately.



<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>
<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>

A 2x2 grid of empty white boxes with black borders, representing a calendar layout for breaking down tasks over four days: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. The days are labeled in a white, cursive font on a black background above each box.

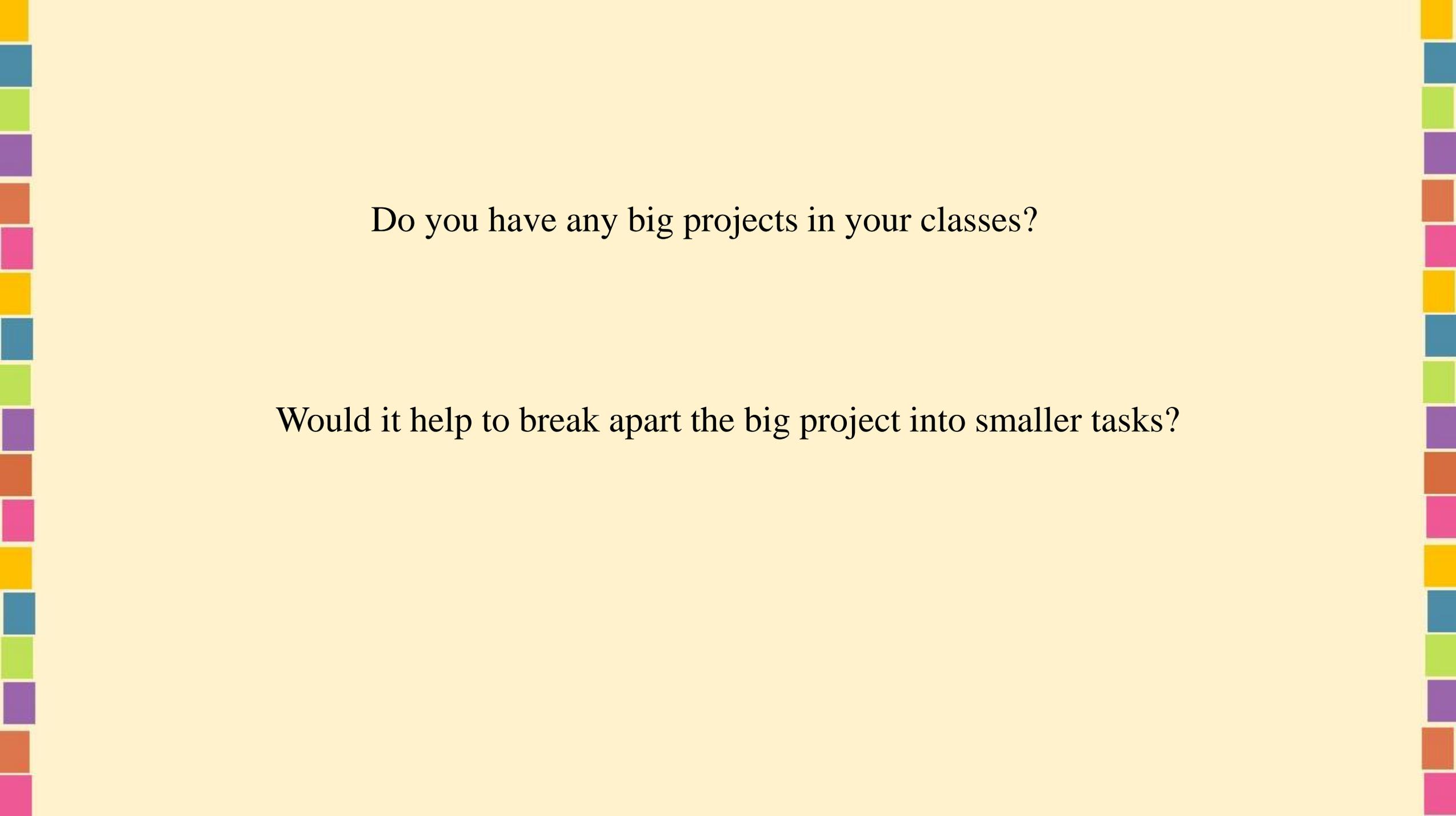
Benny has a project coming up for history. He's supposed to come dressed as someone famous from history and give a speech to the class about the person he chooses.



It's overwhelming for him to start, so he breaks it into smaller tasks.

Next he uses a graphic organizer to write down the smaller tasks, what materials he'll need for each task, and when he'll complete them.

HISTORY PROJECT		
Task	Materials Needed	When I'll Complete It
#1 Choose Famous Person	Pen and paper	Monday
#2 Research Person	Books, internet	Wednesday
#3 Write Speech	Paper	Friday
#4 Create Costume	Clothing, hat, wig	Saturday

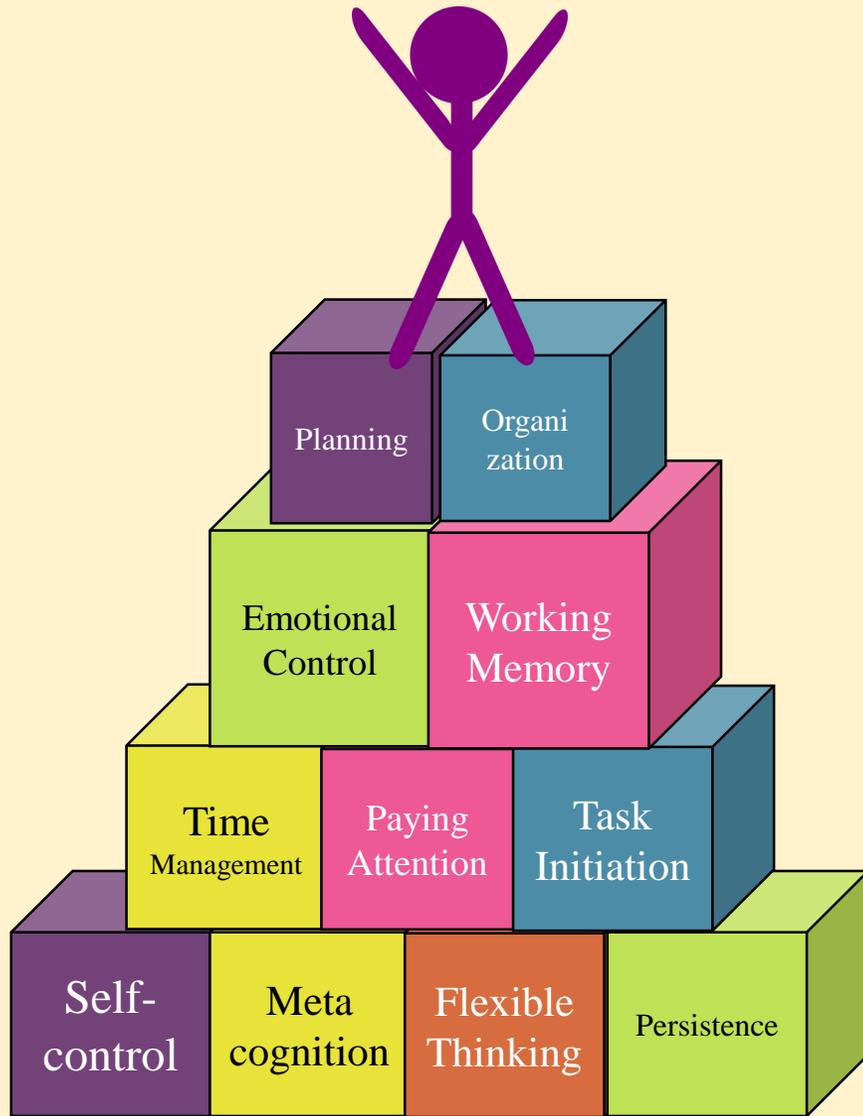


Do you have any big projects in your classes?

Would it help to break apart the big project into smaller tasks?

GOAL

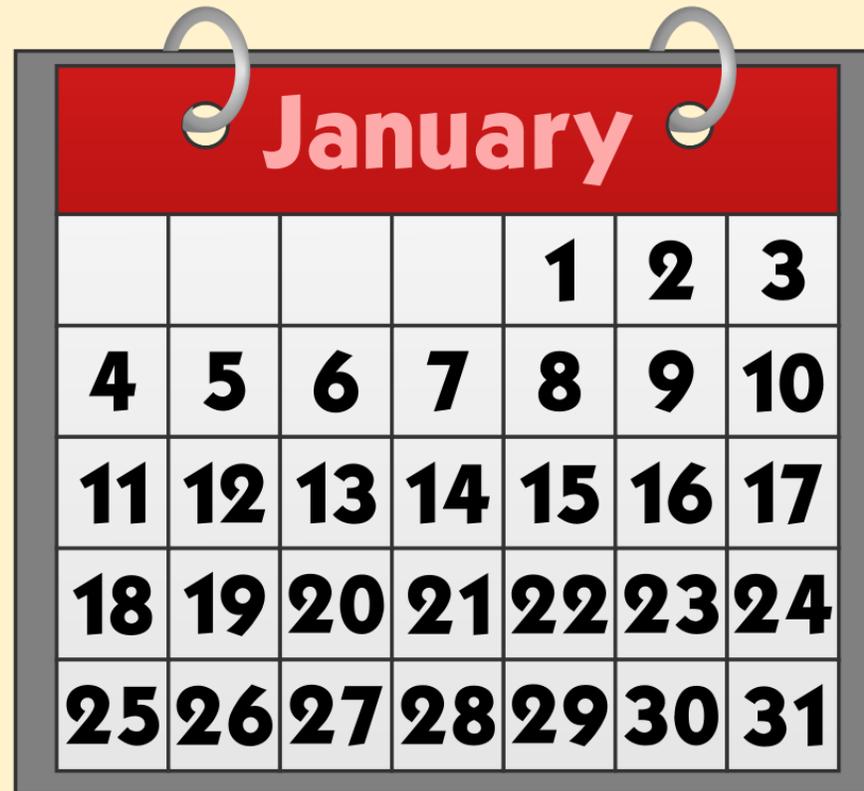
Benny's planning and organizing blocks are getting strengthened by using **to-do lists** and breaking apart tasks!



Tip #4

Use a Calendar

Another important part of a good planner is a **calendar**.



What do we use **calendars** for?

A calendar helps you see time in a bigger way. It can help you visualize when something is coming up and what you need to get done on different days.

MARCH						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3 Piano Lesson	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12 School Play	13	14
15	16	17 Piano Lesson	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25 Science Fair	26	27	28
29	30	31 Piano Lesson				



Do you have a calendar in your classroom?

Do you have one at home?



If you don't have one, ask a parent to help you start using one at home.

MARCH						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14 6 pm 
15	16	17	18	19	20 My birthday! 	21
22	23	24 Book Report Due 	25	26	27	28 7 pm 
29	30	31				

You can write or draw pictures of fun things coming up and deadlines you need to remember. Get into the routine of checking it first thing when you get home every day. This will strengthen your planning executive function.

Benny gets a calendar at home to help him better visualize when things are coming up. Let's help him fill it out.

JANUARY						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

He has soccer practice every Saturday. Click the days he should draw a soccer ball to remember.
Go to next slide when you finish.

He has a test on Thursday, the 12th. Click where he should write “**TEST**” to remember.

JANUARY						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7 
8	9	10	11	12	13	14 
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 
22	23	24	25	26	27	28 
29	30	31				

He has a science fair on the last day of the month.
Should he break this big project into smaller pieces?



Good job! It's best if he breaks this task into smaller ones.



Benny broke his science fair project down into 3 smaller tasks.

Task 1

Task 2

Task 3

Now he needs to decide **when** he'll do each task.

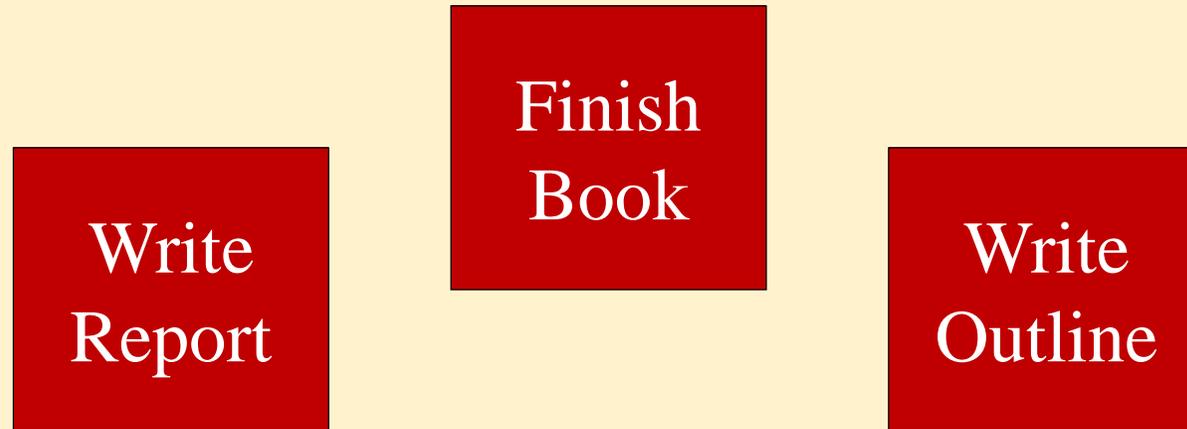
Click on which calendar shows the best way to break those tasks apart.

JANUARY						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30 Task 1 Task 2 Task 3	31 Science Fair				

JANUARY						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12 Task 1	13	14
15	16	17	18	19 Task 2	20	21
22	23	24	25	26 Task 3	27	28
29	30	31 Science Fair				

That's right! It's better to space out the tasks so he'll have enough time to do them.

In February he has a book report due. He's broken it down into 3 different tasks and decides he'll do one each week.



Which task should he do the first week? Click on the best answer.

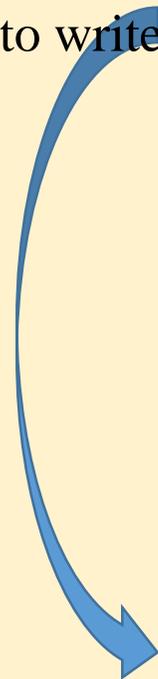
Good! He needs to finish the book before he can do the other tasks. Go to the next slide.



FEBRUARY						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

Which task should he do the second week? Click on the best answer.

Great! He needs to write an outline before he can write his report. Go to the next slide.



FEBRUARY						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Finish Book	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

On the third week, he can schedule writing the report. Having one task each week will help him not be as overwhelmed by the big project.

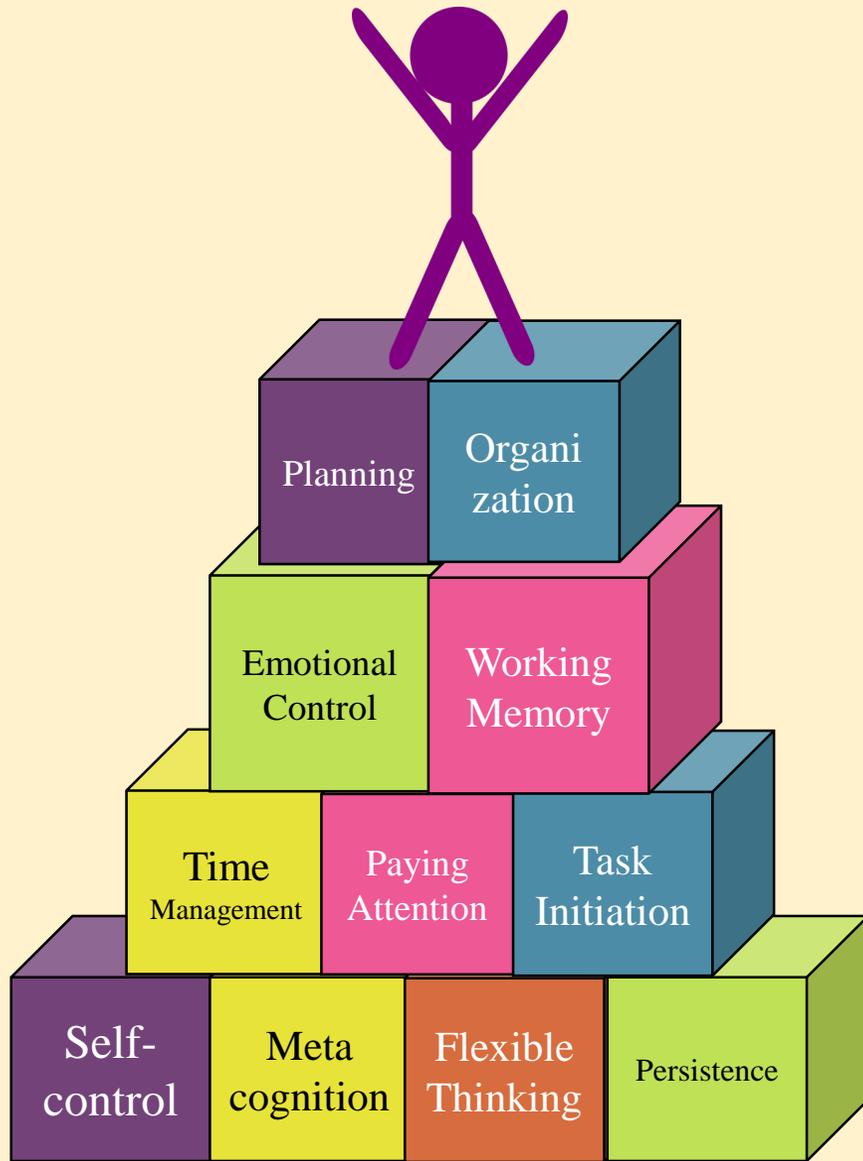
Write
Report



FEBRUARY						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Finish Book	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 Write outline	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

GOAL

Benny has learned to give **everything a place**, break apart large tasks, and use routines, **checklists**, **to-do-lists**, and calendars. Now his weak areas are strong and it's easier for him to **get things done!**



Review:

- Your executive functions help you get things done. We all have weak areas, but with practice they can be strengthened.
- To help with organization, make sure you give everything a place. This frees up your brain space so you can learn.
- Routines and checklists will help you stay organized and not be as overwhelmed.
- Write down things you need to do on to-do lists. Using planners and to-do lists is like giving yourself an extra brain so you don't have to remember as much!
- Breaking apart big projects into smaller tasks is another way to help you stay organized.
- Calendars can help you visualize time and see when things are coming up.