

14 Tips to Becoming a More Organized Teen

Prepare for the day ahead. Lay out your clothes and backpack before going to bed. Every evening, set out all the materials and schoolwork you will need the next day. Don't forget to look at your calendar to determine if the next day is a BLUE day or a GOLD day so you have the right materials. This will save you a ton of time in the morning and you won't have to try to remember to bring everything to school while you are still half awake.

Use organizational tools. Create a system to keep assignments and homework separate for each class. Some students like to use one binder for BLUE days and one binder for GOLD days with dividers for each subject. Other students use an accordion file or folders. Try not to just "stuff" things into your backpack or bag, which can end up being a black hole.

Store all small and/or valuable school materials in the same place every day. Use a pocket that zips on your backpack, a pencil pouch, or a purse to store your flash drive, pencils, and any other small materials that you use on a regular basis. By getting in the habit of storing these things in the same, safe place after each use, you will always know where to find them in at a moment's notice.

Use an organizer/planner/daily agenda. If you have one, use it! Organizers/planners/daily agendas that come with pocket folders, dividers, and planning calendars are ideal. Jot down things as soon as you think of them.

Use lists. It is amazing the difference a list can make when it comes to accomplishing things. Chances are you'll find yourself more productive and more in control of your time. Keep the list in the front of your notebook or in a designated folder so that you know where to check. Get in the habit of reviewing your list every day after school.

Create a study zone. Study at approximately the same time and in the same place each day. Choose a quiet well-lit homework space away from the places your family congregates. The space should be free from distractions like the TV and phone, but music is okay. Don't make your study area too comfortable. Many students, who study on their bed or lying in a comfy chair, fall asleep.

Use your teachers' websites. Each of your teachers has his/her own website with assignments, links, agendas and more. If you are confused, check there first. The websites are also useful if you miss school. If you are absent, do as much work as you can while you are home. It is always a relief to return to school with your make-up work already completed.

Keep a balanced schedule. While you may be tempted to sign up for every extra-curricular activity that sparks your interest, think twice. Taking on too much can really affect your grades and your social life. Look at your course load and how much studying is involved. Then prioritize your recreational interests. Only sign up for as many activities as you honestly feel you can manage. And save time for fun!

Create a study plan. Homework can easily get away from you if you don't have a plan. Realistically determine how many study hours you'll need to invest in each course. The way to good grades is through consistency. Create a daily homework routine and stick to it. Last minute cramming is unnecessary when you have a study plan in place. For major tests and projects that require hours of preparation it is helpful to schedule blocks of study time over several days.

Do a weekly housecleaning. Go through your backpack, bag, and/or organizational tools every week to remove papers you no longer need. Don't throw anything away until the end of the year, but instead keep schoolwork stored in a specific place in your room. You never know when it will come in handy.

If you need help, ask for it. Don't stress over a lesson or assignment you don't understand. Seek help before you end up totally confused and frustrated. If your teacher is unavailable, seek the help of a peer or parent/guardian. Keep a list of classmates' phone numbers and emails. Take advantage of after school homework help and free tutoring at the local library.

Stay on track. For many, a full course load is no easy feat. Expect that from time to time you'll veer off track. Take a deep breath and lean on a peer, school counselor, teacher, or parent/guardian for support. Then, get back on track as quickly as possible. The longer you wait the harder it will be to start, and thinking about doing things is often more painful than actually doing them.

Rise and shine at the same time every day. Having a consistent bedtime will help you feel refreshed when it is time to rise in the morning. It is wise to set your alarm with extra time to spare. If you are having trouble getting up, move your alarm across the room so you will have no choice but to get out of bed and turn it off.

Reward yourself. Acknowledge not only your successes, but also the effort put forth. Keep yourself motivated by singing your own praises and rewarding yourself for schoolwork that is completed on time and with care.

Published by Sherrie Le Masurier, 2006; revised by Naomi Whyllie, 2009