

Organizational Tools

Planning



Take time to plan!

- Hold a regular Family Meeting (weekly? Sunday evening?)
- Have a brief Morning Preview for the day's events
- Use a post-it to make today's to-do list: if you can't fit it on a 3" post-it, it's not going to get done today!
- Use and apply the word "Forethought" often

Language



Tone of voice and intention have great influence, for better or worse.

- Get attention first
- Use sequential cues: "First," "Next," "Finally," etc.
- Speak slowly; use spaces between important steps
- Confirm understanding. "Explain that back to me," NOT, "Did you get that?"
- Leave a note/write it down instead of saying it out loud

Models and

Visual

References



Show, Don't Tell: "Here's what it will look like when it is done."

- Provide samples of essay layouts
- Demonstrate completion of a math procedure rather than just tell or guide
- Point to visual reference rather than tell- signs, posters, work samples, etc.
- Take a photo of how the closet, table setting, desk, etc. should look. Leave it where it can be seen
- Maps and driving directions: Google Maps, Google Earth, Maps (iPhone), "Around Me" (iPhone). Fantastic resources for travel!

Clocks



When planning, look at the clock rather than just talk about time.

- Provide an analog clock for reference- "see" how much time is left
- Practice elapsed time problems: If the movie starts at 7:15 and lasts ninety minutes, will we be home in time for *The Simpsons*?

Alarms and Reminders



For the things you need to remember later:

- Post-its- variable sizes and colors
- Phone based alarms ("World Clock" on iPhone)
- Notifications (email or cell call) in electronic calendars
- Send a voicemail to yourself
- Voice Memos on phones: sometimes just leaving the memo works as well as checking it
- Send an Email to yourself with a reminder in the subject line so you don't have to open it ("nfm"= No further message)
- "reQall" iPhone app: sends an email with your voice dictation as subject line

Timers



Use timers to (1) monitor how much time goes into things, (2) set limits on time spent, and (3) generate competition for efficiency.

- Egg timer- very visual, Digital timer- flexible
- "Ticker" timer promotes competition, but can generate anxiety/distraction.
- TV/game timers built-in on TV/cable/Internet
- Online-stopwatch.com is an easy iGoogle gadget for time tracking
- Time management software: "Time Manager" iPhone app = digital timeclock to track time spent on various activities. A bit complex.

Labels and Locations



Reduce dependence on visual memory and establish routines.

- Have a "Drop Zone" for after school and morning
- Use separate boxes, shelves, rooms, etc. for different things. Label them!
- Consider plain sight vs. behind doors for storage
- Use labels for ongoing identification or just temporarily for "training"
- Simplified filing: two-compartment binder: Home/School, or To Do/Done
- Create file folders in your desk drawer for each class. Make matching file folders on the computer; put these in one "Schoolwork" folder.
- Use color codes on labels and containers, etc. Use multicolor highlighters for some reading tasks. Use color to distinguish differences.
- Before you leave the room to get something, visualize yourself in another room getting the object to make it more likely to remember.
- Buy a labelmaker such as a Brother or Dymo. Let the kids make labels.
- Make the computer a *tool*, not entertainment. Consider buying a game system such as PS3 and remove/forbid all games on the computer.

Graphic Organizers



Use graphic organizers including charts, tables, pictures, diagrams, etc. to reinforce understanding and memory as well as to explore concepts.

- *Inspiration* software: www.inspiration.com
- Other graphic organizers supplied/applied by teachers and tutors or made by parents

Assignment Sheets



Make it *mandatory* to write assignments down!

- Weekly planner
- Monthly planner
- Cumulative List form- some students work well from a list of tasks rather than a chart.
- Specific study calendar for finals
- See www.kaulele.com for downloads of some of these items.

Lists



Four steps to good lists: (1) *List*, (2) *Group*, (3) *Label*, (4) *Sequence*. Go beyond making a list. Take the time to **organize** it and **prioritize** it.

- You need to be able to sequence, not rate, items in a list to prioritize them. What will you do first? Next? Next?
- "Google Tasks" is a task list that integrates with Google Calendar and allows you to list things by due date or personal priority.
- Some lists are recurring: daily, weekly, etc. Can you check off when done? Can you re-use the same list again so you don't have to re-write? Some lists are cumulative: creating and using them gets better with time.
- Type a list in Word or Excel and save for multiple uses
- Post-its: perfect for short-term: Use a single 3" post-it to plan today's priorities.
- Attach key lists to a clipboard such as "Loft Storage"
- "Use Your Handwriting" iPhone App: Hand-write short, temporary To-do lists
- "Shopper" iPhone App for shopping lists
- Also use "Shopper" or similar for specific lists such as Hurricane Prep, Charity Donations, Gift Planning
- "uPackingList" iPhone App: packing lists for specific trips and events
- "PTO" (Put Things Off) iPhone App: Allows you to list all to-do's then "put off" all that you don't think you can manage today

Calendars



A calendar is an advanced list. It incorporates *time, scheduling, duration, even location.*

- Electronic: *Google Calendar* and others
- Investing time in an electronic calendar builds organization for the future
- There is value in short-term use just to get a sense of how you or your student understands time constraints, but there is far greater value with cumulative use.
- Work/plan at computer; check or enter changes w/ phone or note when away
- Printed monthly calendars are still important even if you use an electronic calendar. You don't want to bring the computer to the dinner table, but you might bring the June calendar to discuss your vacation goals. Use a commercial calendar or print from your electronic calendar.
- Use shared calendars (on electronic calendars), some of which parents manage for the student.
- Sample Calendars:
 - Appointment Book- obligations
 - Home Management- domestic services, social events, etc.
 - Holidays (subscribe to a pre-made list)
 - Family Birthdays
 - Parent Schedule (for students at college to have a sense of what is going on back home)
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