

Top back-to-school organizing tips

Written by Editor
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(ARA) - The start of a new school year is like a fresh box of crayons - full of possibilities.

Ginny Bean, mother of three and publisher of Ginny's catalog, suggests families take advantage of this clean slate by establishing some new organizing routines.

Think ahead. Mornings are chaotic in most households with school-aged children. Consider handling as many daytime preparations as possible the night before. Lay out clothes. Pack lunches. Set out the breakfast dishes and cereal. Pack backpacks.

Bean suggests making systems kid-friendly, so young helpers can feel involved, and save mom some time in the process. "Carve out a spot on a lower shelf of the pantry for lunch boxes and lunch-making supplies. Then make children responsible for putting away their empty lunch boxes at the end of the school day, or even packing their own lunch."

Tackle school paperwork. Make a habit of sorting through children's backpacks with them the same day they come home. Allot time after school, when you arrive home from work, or after dinner, depending on your family's schedule. For schoolwork and artwork you want to keep, try a two-step approach. First, purge unwanted items as soon as they come in the door. Collect the possible keepers in a storage bin or wheeled cart with color-coded drawers that allow for easy separation by child or project type.

Designate a homework spot. Decide on the best spot in your home to set up homework central. Take into consideration how involved you need to be with homework and your child's style. Does he focus better with people around or in a private setting? Is he better suited to sit at a desk or curled up in a favorite chair with a laptop cart?

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Once you have a place picked out, gather together handy homework tools and supplies into a nearby bin, drawer or cabinet. Stock up on age-appropriate supplies such as pens, pencils, erasers, paper, crayons, markers, a ruler, dictionary, calculator and a pencil sharpener.

Create a communication hub. Include the family calendar, a chalk or bulletin board for posting messages and reminders, a binder for key documents, colored markers, pens and pencils. If you're a visual person, consider color coding your calendar by assigning each family member a different color.