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11 School Organization and Time Management Tips

How to get and stay organized for school, along with time management tips, from organizational experts.



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As the school year continues to pick up steam, it can sometimes feel near impossible to stay organized. You have your classes, your sports or other extracurriculars, plus your social life — and, as they all become increasingly busy and demanding, what feels like a decreasing number of hours in the day. But, when your schedule gets crazy, keeping your space and your schedule clean and organized is what will keep you sane. Read on for 11 expert time and space management and organization tips to help get you through the rest of this school year as stress-free as possible.

Time Management

Break things down. Kosta Karakashyan, a college student and blogger behind *Cool Gear Cavalier*, uses one notebook with a page dedicated to each activity, project, and goal, to keep himself organized and on track. “Break [your goals] down into 2-4 smaller steps, then break down each of [those steps] into daily tasks you can do to achieve [the goals]” he tells *Teen*

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Get a planner that does the work for you. Okay, that would be too good to be true. At least as of now, there isn't any sort of quick fix that will *actually* do all of your organizing for you. But there are some pretty amazing planners out there — the old-fashioned, paper kind — that can be game changers when it comes to getting and staying organized. Take the **LifePlanner Stylized Organizer** from Erin Condren: You can customize not only the look of it, but also the layout. “[The] snap in to-do lists, productivity sheets, and even meal planners...are essential,” Erin, the founder and chief Style Officer of her namesake company, tells *Teen Vogue*. “The more you can write down the items that you store in your head after a day’s worth of classes, the more you can keep track of what needs to be done and when.” She suggests assigning a colored sticker to each class so you can clearly label and highlight important tests, deadlines, and more. Use the write-on/wipe-off feature of the snap-in dashboards to write yourself inspirational quotes or motivational messages to yourself that you can change regularly.

Put your reminders where you can see them. Even if you’re not a full-blown, paper planner type of person, getting in the habit of writing down everything that’s even semi-important will go a long way in staying organized, and remembering what you need to remember. Organizing consultant **Jakia Muhammad** suggests writing down every important date (tests, due dates, and more) from your class syllabus on sticky notes, and sticking them where you’re bound to see them. “Once the deadline comes...take down the [sticky note] and discard it,” she says. “By doing this, it serves as a sense of accomplishment and motivates you to keep going to complete the next assignments.”

Use an app for that. If you just don’t see yourself using paper notebooks, planners, or notes to keep track of your life; fear not — there are plenty of digital tools out there that can help you do just the same. “Use a digital to-do list app to help keep track of everything, including when to study for exams, work on papers, etc,” Laurie Palau, founder and CEO of **simply B organized**, says. She recommends **Wunderlist** or **Evernote**, which “is like having a virtual notebook with you at all times,” Laurie says. “You can easily edit, update, share, and retrieve all your information from any device, anytime.”

Color code your calendar. Whether you’re a digital or a paper calendar person, try color coding everything you type or write in it. “Assign colors for each category ([for example], blue=social events, red=homework due dates, purple=meetings) so that you not only stay on track of what’s coming up, but can use it as your daily checklist for how you need to prepare for the day,” professional organizer, **Rachel Rosenthal**, tells us. “Nothing is more frustrating than being all the way across campus and realizing that you left something in your dorm room and have to trek back to get it.”

Schedule your goals. Don’t stop at just setting your goals, or writing them down on lists. Actually schedule time to accomplish them (or to take the small steps you’ll take to accomplish them) in your calendar. “Estimate the time [each step] will take and then schedule the task into your week [...] with start and end times,” says **Barbara DiGangi**, a licensed master social worker with expertise in productivity and self-improvement. “This will help you stay on task during the day, help you prioritize, and be reasonable about what you have time to get done during the time you have.”

time you have.

Make the most of your downtime. Even the busiest people tend to have bits of downtime between classes, commitments, and activities — the ones that are too short to go home and nap or relax, or get any major project done, but long enough to accomplish something quick and easy. The key there is knowing what you can accomplish. “Have tasks at hand that you can complete quickly [like] answering emails, returning a phone call, reading a section of an assignment, or writing a thank-you note to your grandmother,” Frank Buck, author of *Get Organized! Time Management for School Leaders*, says. “You will be amazed at how much you can accomplish during a break between classes, standing in line, or waiting for that notoriously late friend to show up.”

Spacial Organization

Maximize vertical space. In dorm rooms, every inch of space counts. And while things like beds, desks, and futons tend to take up most of the horizontal space, the vertical space often goes underutilized. “Maximize vertical space ([like] walls [and] backs of doors) with hooks for jackets, jewelry, keys, [and more],” Laurie says. “Use bed risers to add additional storage space under your bed. They even make **bed risers** with outlets and USB ports so you can charge your devices without having to run extension cords all over the room!”

Get closet smart. Forgo those thick plastic hangers in favor of **Huggable Hangers** which, Laurie notes, are far slimmer, making room for that many more hanging clothes in your closet. Or, take it to a new level with **Higher Hangers**, slim hangers that also bring your clothes closer to the hanging bar, making room for more vertical storage in your closet as well.

Pre-plan your outfits. “Figuring out what to wear in the morning is not only time-consuming, but also [can] leave a huge mess in your closet when you're done,” Hanh Nguyen, CEO of closet organizing and outfit planning app, **Glamoutfit**, says. To save time and avoid the disorganized mess, use an app like Glamoutfit to log your clothes, digitally create outfits, and plan ahead. “Every time [I buy] a clothing item, I create different outfit combinations that I [can create] with that item, then organize the outfits into activity categories like school, work, going out, etc...in Glamoutfit,” Hanh says. “When I have to get ready in a hurry, I just look at the corresponding activity category as a guidance to decide on what to wear.” Even if you're not using an app, simply taking the time to pick out your outfit the night before (and put away the clothes you tried and discarded) will save you time in the morning.

Go for an unconventional dorm layout. Chances are, when you moved into your dorm, the beds were set up against the walls, parallel to each other. But, chances also are, you're not required to keep them that way — and Laurel & Wolf Designer, **Ashley Bussell**, has a perfect, space-saving alternative. “One way to make your room feel bigger...is moving the beds into an L shape, with one bordering a window and one bordering a wall,” she says. The space you'll save can be used to even further organize your room.

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