

Parent Tips for Developing Students' OTMP Skills

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Research shows that parents play a key role in helping students develop skills in organization, time management and planning (OTMP). Following are a series of tip sheets for parents whose children are struggling with OTMP. Sent home in a backpack, handed out at PTA meetings, or given during parent teacher conferences, these tips can help parents get their children on the path to success. The tip sheet set includes the following documents, to be used singly or as a set:

- **Helping Your Child Develop Organization, Time Management, and Planning Skills**
- **Helping Your Child Learn to Track Assignments**
- **Helping Your Child Learn to Manage Materials**
- **Helping Your Child to Learn Time Management and Task Planning**
- **Motivating Your Child to Organize**

3 Steps to Helping Your Child Develop Organization, Time Management, and Planning Skills

Are you wondering if you should step in and help your child with organization? The simple answer: If she's doing well on her own, let her go - If she's struggling, she needs you to help. Here's how:

1. **Prompt** your child to use specific strategies and tools that will help handle his organizational challenge. For example, ask your child to make a list of the things he needs to pack in his backpack and cue him to check that list while packing up.
2. **Monitor** your child's use of these strategies and tools. If your child is working on keeping all of her papers organized, check her backpack each afternoon to see if all papers are filed in the proper place.
3. **Praise** your child for using the strategies and tools. Remember, even small improvements deserve praise! A child who used to write down two of his five daily assignments should be congratulated when he starts writing down four out of five.

Helping Your Child Learn to Track Assignments

The key to tracking assignments well is the effective use of a planner. You can work with your child to develop a good routine for planner use. Here are 4 rules for using a planner to its fullest:

1. **Write something in each subject area** – either the day’s assignment or “none.” While a blank space may indicate that your child forgot to record an assignment, writing “none” shows that she thought about whether or not there was an assignment for that subject.
2. **Have a place to record long-term assignments.** If your child’s planner has a monthly view, this is a great place to list long-term projects or tests. Alternately, your child can list these on the daily view of the day they are due, and put a few reminders on days leading up to the due date.
3. **Details, details, details!** Make sure your child lists enough information to be able to do the assignment correctly.
4. **Check for accuracy.** Double-check what your child has written against teachers’ websites or with a classmate’s parent. Praise your child when he gets his assignments written down correctly!

Helping Your Child Learn to Manage Materials

Help your child develop a system for organizing her papers. A good system includes:

- Separate, labeled sections for each subject
- A storage method that allows papers to be filed quickly when rushing out of class – avoid binders that require your child to punch holes in each paper
- A section labeled “For Parents” to store notices and other materials to be brought home to you

Two good storage options: an accordion file or a three ring binder with folders for each subject

Check in with your child each afternoon to see how he is using his storage system:

- Quickly check to see if all papers are filed under the correct subject heading
Give your child praise for filing papers in the right place.
- When homework is done, prompt your child to file it under the correct subject. Also remind your child to return any papers taken out for homework back in their proper place.

Not home when your child does his homework? Check later on that night that everything has been put back properly.

Helping Your Child to Learn Time Management and Task Planning

You can help your child plan to use his after school time effectively. Here are the steps to a well-planned afternoon:

- Ask your child what homework he has, and when he plans to do each assignment.
- Help him to consider what other things he should think about leaving time for: afterschool activities, meals, fun activities, etc.
- At the end of the day, check in with him again to see how his plan worked and, if needed, talk about adjusting the plan to work better for the next day.
- Remember, it's ok to let your child try out a plan in which he plays video games before he does his homework, as long as you help your child to use any resulting difficulties as a learning experience to help create better plans for the future.
- Not home when your child gets back from school? Ask him to create a plan on his own, and review the plan and how things went when you get home.

Motivating Your Child to Organize

Do you need help getting your kids on board for organizing? These tips can help:

1. **Don't treat disorganization as a character flaw.** Research shows organization is harder for some kids, in the same way some students need extra help with math or reading. Telling kids that they are lazy or undisciplined only dampens their motivation.
2. **Change negatives to positives.** Instead of giving kids negative messages (“What’s so hard about using a folder?” or “You’ll never get away with this in high school!”), help them take a constructive attitude (“This is challenging, but I’m here to help you take on the challenge”).
3. **Take it one step at a time.** To avoid your child feeling overwhelmed, work on tackling only one organizational challenge at a time. For example, help your child focus on tracking assignments until he has this skill well in hand. Then move on to organizing his papers.
4. **Praise!** Don't wait for an improved report card to tell your child you are proud of his progress. Praise all the little steps along the way remembering to bring home all his books, filling out his planner correctly, finishing homework before bedtime, etc.