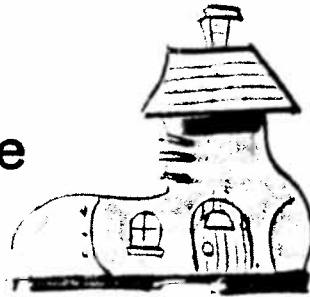


# chapter 6

## Organize Your Space



### Cluttered Spaces = Cluttered Minds

Now that your folders and notebooks are in order, it's time to put your space in order, too. The condition of your bedroom, book bag, and locker plays a big role in your efficiency in school. Messy spaces can be overwhelming and distracting, not to mention the perfect place to lose homework and other important things.

#### A Place for Everything and Everything in It's Place

With two younger brothers and a busy household, keeping things organized was a fairly low priority for my family as I was growing up. It seems like we were always scouring the house trying to find our shoes, keys, and other personal items. And, it was usually impossible to find things like scissors, measuring tape, and markers.

However, there was always one thing that, in over 20 years, was never lost; the flashlight. Why, you might ask, could we always find the flashlight? Because we had a very specific place designated for it. The flashlight was fairly heavy-duty with a long handle, so Dad cut a piece of PVC pipe down to about 10 inches, screwed it to the bottom of the shelf in our hall closet, and stored the flashlight in the pipe. It was the one piece of equipment we could *always* find.

As this example illustrates, the key to *keeping* your space organized is having a specific, designated space for all of your belongings.

The information in this chapter will help you create a home for all of your things and help you keep your space well organized. The chapter is not about being perfectly clean, but about having a general sense of control when it comes to managing your belongings.

## Organize *Mission Control*: Your Room

Your room is your personal Mission Control; the central space from which you organize your life. Having a cluttered and chaotic room can have a dramatic effect on how you perform in school. When your room is organized, you are more likely to keep track of your assignments and be more efficient with homework, getting ready for school, and doing just about anything else. Most significantly, you will have a greater feeling of control in your life.





Depending on how messy your room is, it may take a little while to get it cleaned and organized in the first place. However, the following steps will guide you through a process that will make it easy to keep your room organized for the long-haul.

### **step** 1 **Remove the Stuff You Don't Need**

Decluttering is a little easier said than done, yet is vital to getting organized. In our disposable society, we accumulate items so fast that our possessions can easily overtake our lives if we are not careful. How can you easily get rid of the extra things you don't need?

**Label four large boxes (or garbage bags): "Trash", "Donations", "Storage", and "Somewhere Else."**

Just as the labels suggest:

-  **The Trash Box** is for garbage.
-  **The Donations Box** is for used clothes, toys, CDs, etc. that are in good condition and can be donated to charity. (This is a great way to help others and to recycle at the same time.)
-  **The Storage Box** is for items you want to keep, but do not need to store in your room. (Ask for your parents' permission before you store your belongings anywhere else in the house.)
-  **The Somewhere Else Box** is for items that belong somewhere else in the house. Instead of wasting a lot of time by running found items around the rest of the house, collect them all together and deliver them to their correct place all at once.

#### Storage Tip

If you must put items in 'storage,' clearly label the outside of all containers that you are storing. One way to keep storage stuff under control is to limit yourself to one large box, especially for memorabilia. If an item does not fit in your box, then it is time to get rid of something.



**step**

## Group Similar Items Together

**Gather similar items together to help identify a logical home for them.** As you may recall, establishing a place for everything is the key to keeping your space organized.

**Do you have a spot to store the following:**

- CDs, DVDs, and related equipment?
- Stuffed animals?
- Trophies and awards?
- Notes and pictures of friends?
- Sports equipment?
- Music equipment (instruments, etc.)?
- School supplies and your "Home Filing System"?
- Books?
- Computer, computer supplies, and other electronic devices?
- Clothes? (Are they overstuffed in drawers or closets?)
- Supplies/materials for a special hobby that you have?



Look around your room...are there additional items that did not fit in any of the previous categories? It is okay to have a group of items that do not seem to go with anything else...these will be the last items you put away.

**step**

## Find a Place for Everything

Creating a specific place for everything is the key step to *keeping* your room organized. Consider the following storage suggestions:

**Space under the bed is good for storing items such as shoes, CDs, and bedding.** Simply put items in containers that will slide out so you can easily access everything. There are several storage containers on the market for use under standard beds.

**Use the tops of tall bookcases and dressers.** These are good places to store things that you do not need to access regularly, such as stuffed animals and trophies.

**Look up!** Many closets have a lot of unused space above the top shelf. Consider storing large items there such as luggage and sleeping bags. (Would the sleeping bag fit inside the luggage?)



A large bulletin board is a great place to post pictures, notes from friends, special mementos, ribbons, and other 2-dimensional items. In addition to keeping desk and dresser tops free of clutter, they can add a nice dimension to your room. You can dress up a standard bulletin board with fabric (like the one pictured to the left) or by spray painting it to match your room.

**Trunks provide great storage and added seating space for visiting friends.** However, trunk space should not be used to store small items that will easily get lost in the deep space. Consider using trunks for storing shoes, extra bedding, board games, bulky sweaters, sport/music equipment, or other large items.

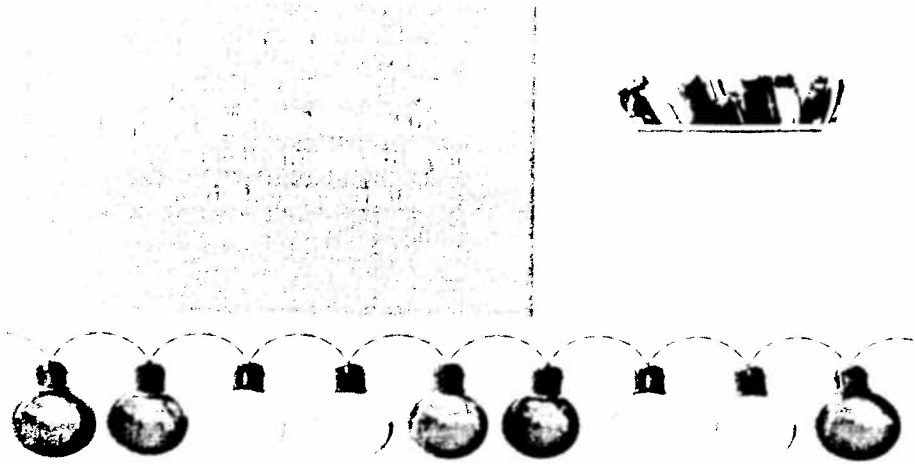
**Plastic crates are good for items such as books, CDs, school supplies, electronics accessories, and small sports equipment.** Crates are ideal storage pieces because their utility is flexible; their use can change as your needs and interests change. Secondly, the stackable nature of the crates makes good use of vertical storage, which is commonly unused space.



## Organize Your Study Space

Whether you typically do your homework in your bedroom, in the kitchen, near the computer, or anywhere else, it is important that you have a place with few distractions so you can get homework done quickly.

Some tips for maximizing your study space:



**Make your space comfortable.** Snaz it up with a poster, flowers, holiday lights... Making your study space more inviting will help to make the process of doing homework a bit more enjoyable.



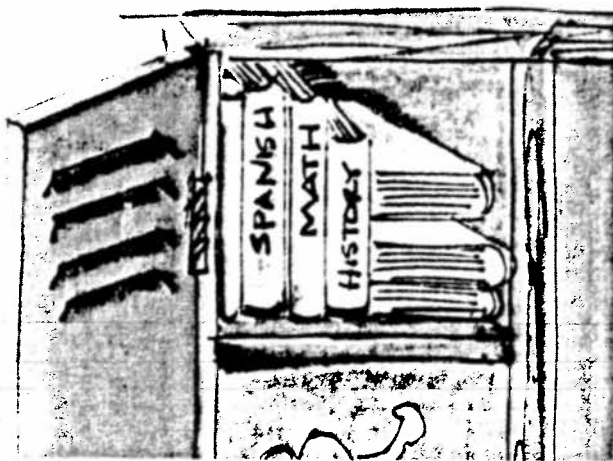
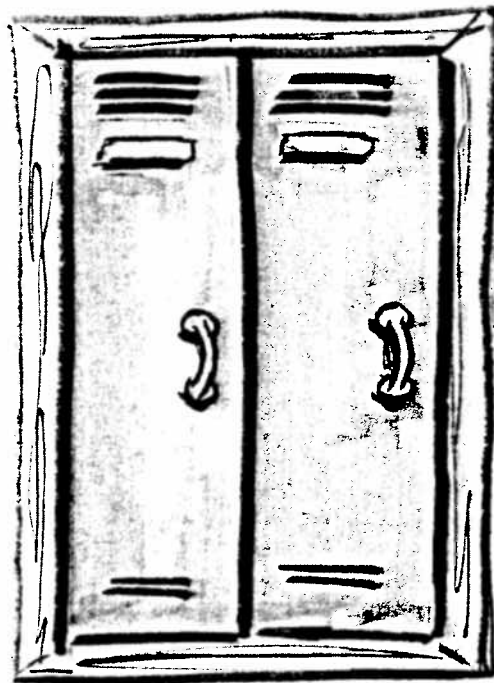
**Keep lighting and temperature at comfortable levels.** The lighting should be comfortable for you...not too dim, but not too bright. Likewise, the room temperature should not be extreme. Lighting and temperature play a big role in helping you stay focused.

**Use music that promotes concentration.** You can find many sources of music, in app stores and online music stores that specifically promote concentration. (Search "music for concentration.") The sound waves generated by this type of music match the same frequencies as brainwaves in a state of learning and high concentration. This type of music helps your brain focus very quickly and minimizes distractions. If you live in an active house, it will help you mask background noise. It also works well for background noise if you can't concentrate when it's too quiet.

## Organize Your Locker

First and foremost, keep trash out of your locker! When you are in a rush for class, you can't afford to be rifling through a bunch of junk trying to find your books.

Get in and out of your locker quickly by storing morning books flat and afternoon books standing upright. This tactic helps you identify and grab books quickly, not only because they are neatly organized, but because it is easier to pull textbooks out of two smaller, lighter piles than one tall, heavy pile. If you have covers on your textbooks, label the spines clearly so you don't grab the wrong book.



Keep morning books flat and afternoon books standing upright.

As you stop at your locker throughout the day, place books you need for homework on the floor of your locker, under your coat (just be sure you don't have water or melting snow on your coat that will drip onto your books).

## Organize Your Book Bag

The greatest weapon against a book bag in disarray is the SOAR<sup>®</sup> Binder! The primary cause of a disorganized bag is the collection of loose papers that collect in the bottom, getting crushed and crumpled by the rest of your belongings. Always use your binder to keep papers in order. It cannot be emphasized enough, even if you are in a rush and don't have time to put papers in their proper folders, at least slide them inside the front of your binder to put away later. This simple step will save you many hours of searching for papers in the depths of your book bag and prevent you from losing points on lost homework that you know you did!

Before you head home at the end of the school day, take one last look in your locker to make sure you haven't left behind books or supplies that you need for homework. Likewise, before you go to bed at night, always check your bag to make sure you have everything you need for school the next day, *especially* your binder.



## Conclusion

All of the information in this chapter is designed to give you some pointers for keeping your belongings under control. You do not have to be a 'neat freak' to stay organized, but should simply identify places for your possessions and try to keep them in place. Like everything else, it will be easier for some than others, but is a great habit to develop. Learning how to organize your things will benefit you for the rest of your life, saving time and allowing you to be more productive. It is a wonderful feeling when you have control over your clutter; instead of your clutter having control over you.

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***It is a wonderful feeling when you have control over your clutter, instead of your clutter having control over you.***

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Now that your space is organized, you are in a position to begin working more efficiently. The next chapter will provide you with even more resources for efficiency (i.e. more personal time) as you learn strategies for organizing your time.