

## Getting Organized for Back-to-School

Nothing compares to the first day of school. It's a day full of promise and possibilities. A clean slate. A fresh start. A new beginning. To make the most of it, you've got to get organized. Here are some organizing tips to help start the new school year off on the right foot:

### **Out with the old and in with the new**

I am a fan of using something until it falls apart and shopping at consignment stores, but when it comes to school supplies, it's best to purchase new items. Get rid of last year's ripped-up, worn-out old backpack, and splurge on a new one. Throw away all those old folders that are falling apart, held together by a bunch of Hannah Montana stickers, and buy some fresh, clean ones. The same goes for clothes. Go through your child's closet and dresser, and pull out anything that is too small or needs to be mended. If it has holes or tears that can't be fixed, just throw it out (or put it in the rag pile, if you have one). It is easier to start off the school year with a positive, focused attitude, when you don't have last year's trash and clutter to get in the way.

### **Rejuvenate your routine**

Children (and adults) perform better when they follow a routine. What was your morning routine like last year? What worked? What needs improvement? Were your children perpetually late for the bus or always complaining about not having anything to wear? When establishing a morning routine, it helps to prepare the night before. For example, lay out the next day's clothes, pack lunches, and set shoes and backpacks by the front door. What about after school? Your after-school routine is just as important as how you start the day. Consider setting up a homework station for each child, stocked with extra school supplies. Doing homework at the same time and in the same place every night helps your child develop essential study skills and self-discipline that will improve their school performance and serve them well in years to come.

### **Paper, paper everywhere**

Children come home with a lot of paper... school handbooks and policies, calendars, permission slips, progress reports, and more. What do you do with all that paper? First of all, set up a backpack station, an area where kids can unload their papers from the day and hand them off to mom or dad. Then, organize everything into three categories: 1) Action items, 2) Future reference, and 3) Keepsakes. Action items require you to "do" something, such as sign a permission slip and return it to the school or sign up to bake brownies for a school bake sale. Future reference includes any documents or information you might refer to at a later date, like a school handbook or a reading list. Keepsakes are special papers or projects that hold sentimental value and can include artwork, poetry, or even that A+ math test. The best idea for organizing all those papers is to keep them in a three-ring binder, clearly divided into sections. The binder should be easily accessible to every member of your family. If you have several children, consider dedicating one binder to each child.

Preparing for back-to-school can be hectic and stressful, but if you follow these tips, you will be well on your way to making the most of the new school year.

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