

the school years toolkit

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Organisational Strategies for School and Home

Finding a book

Suggestions/Strategies:

- Colour code subjects, for example: Red for Maths, Blue for Science, Yellow for English, etc. This can be done by using:
 - coloured spots
 - colouring a white book
 - coloured dividers in file
 - coloured plastic envelopes – or combinations of any of the above.

Finding relevant page/sheet

Suggestions/Strategies:

- In an exercise book, find the next clean page and start work
- In a work sheet / book:
 - looking for the next unused page
 - use of book mark/paper clip to be placed when have finished work
- Teacher/parents open the book to the correct page.

Finding place on page

Suggestions/Strategies:

- If the child needs Left/Right or Top/Bottom directions, colour-code those areas e.g.
 - green strip on the left side
 - red strip on the right side
- Prompt at the top of the paper e.g.
 - Sticky face stamp
 - Coloured dot sticker
 - Can be placed top left where work is initiated or on the right where work finishes.

NB: consistent use of these is important.

Section 5 **advice** sheets

Remembering the weekly timetable

Suggestions/Strategies:

- Use a drawn-up weekly planner
- Colour code subjects to correspond with books
- Use pictures to remind the child to bring specific items e.g. sports kit, musical instrument, library book
- Duplicate the timetable and keep it in relevant places e.g. locker, diary/rough book, at home, desk.

Remembering items e.g. homework games kit

Suggestions/Strategies:

- Use of diary/rough book to jot down important things to remember. NB: Writing does not need to be neat as long as it is understandable to the child
- Use of a consistent homework diary/folder which, again, can be colour coded
- Use of year/term planner at home to remind of important events as well as daily information
- Pack school bag nightly, possibly using a checklist and cross checking with timetable/planner
- Leave items in same place e.g. games kit in bag at school.

Remembering set items/location

Suggestions/Strategies:

- Poster notes/pictures on door, e.g. Games Kit, Library Book
- Alphabet stuck across top of desk
- Name of desk to remind of place
- Label with written names or pictures e.g. scissors, paint, books.

Next step in regular routine

Suggestions/Strategies:

- Routine broken into sections e.g.
- Pack up time written on prompt card on child's desk or board:
 - tidy up
 - check homework
 - collect messages
 - collect coat and bag.

Can also be used at home for getting ready to go to school.

Section 5 **advice** sheets

Finding place on the blackboard

Suggestions/Strategies:

- Present ONE subject at a time
- Colour code the subject or use a different colour for each line or word:
 - In number work – to align columns of units, tens, hundreds
 - In written work – to highlight margins; correct placement of letters on lines
- Divide the board into sections
- Clear the board of visual clutter.

Copying from blackboard or whiteboard

Suggestions/Strategies:

- Try the above
- Use of worksheets
- Allow more time
- Sit the child facing the board near the front of the class
- Let the child copy off another student.

Some general principles

Suggestions/Strategies:

- Use hand-outs to supplement the blackboard/whiteboard
- Use auditory and visual information together
- Use set methods eg numbering to sequence blackboard/whiteboard work
- Eliminate as much visual distraction as possible eg seat the child centrally at front of the class, clear unnecessary clutter from the blackboard/whiteboard
- Present smaller units of work at a time
- Avoid visually confusing strategies such as writing over pictures and diagrams.

Additional Suggestions

Many children can become overwhelmed by too much visual and/or auditory information. By controlling the classroom environment, you can maximise children's ability to remain focused and organised.

Environmental suggestions

Flashcards – Key words or pictures at strategic locations around the classroom and other relevant places to cue the child as to the "next step" in a regular routine. For example, flashcards at pack-up time indicating the need to:

- tidy up
- check homework requirements
- letters to take home
- collect coat and bag.

Section 5 **advice** sheets

Minimise, as far as is practically possible, the amount of additional visual material you have hanging from the ceiling or on the walls.

Help desk organisation with a picture template of where each item inside the desk belongs or have stencil outlines on the desk-top for placement of essential stationary items e.g. pencil, ruler and rubber.

Tape a number or letter line directly onto the child's desk if they get distracted when using the one on the board or wall.

Spelling words may also need to be on a separate card/book instead of the blackboard/whiteboard.

By closing the classroom door, you can limit external auditory input from the hallway. Try seating the child away from open windows or doors.

Consider the places where the child works well, for example in a corner of a room or with the desk facing a wall.

Ensure that the child is looking at the chosen activity before you commence. Reinforce verbally for example, "Good Looking". Recall attention by verbal prompting. The child may need prompting to slow down in their approach to an activity.

Ensure that the child is looking at the person who is giving verbal instructions. Deliver instructions for all activities in a concise way, perhaps with some firm contact whilst speaking, for example a hand on the child's shoulder or back.

Encourage the child to feedback verbally the task which you have asked them to do.

Timetable suggestions

Some children may benefit from a predictable timetable to their school day. Each morning, outline the timetable for the day with the class. Highlight any changes from the typical routine that will occur that day.

Discuss or create a "story" about unexpected events before they occur, e.g. fire drills or assemblies, to help children prepare for these potentially overwhelming situations.

Older children may benefit from a homework organiser to keep their timetable and homework details in. The teacher may have to check this after each class to make sure the homework details are correct and the child understands them.

Section 5 **advice** sheets

Further suggestions you may find useful

Use of graph paper to help organise maths work.

Lined paper for writing is essential for some children.

Whenever possible, present information in the child's best modality ie visual, auditory or multi-sensory learning activities that facilitate understanding and memory for the information.

It is important to involve the child in the selection of the strategies which will be used and that the approach is consistent at home and in school. Reduce the frequency of support and prompts when the child no longer requires them and becomes confident in using the strategies, remembering that, as adults, we all use checklists, diaries, highlighters etc.