

Organisational Strategies

This helpful guide was prepared by the Community Paediatric Occupational Therapy Team at The Crystal Centre, Croydon PCT – simply brilliant for anyone going on to secondary school / college

“Anyone can be organised; it’s not an inborn talent. It’s a skill that can be learned”

Organising “..is about design. If your system is a custom fit for you, maintaining it will be a breeze. You don’t have to change who you are to get organised. You have to work with your natural habits and goals. You design the system to support you, not to change you.” (both quotes from: Organizing from the Inside out for Teens by Morgenstern and Morgenstern-Colon)

It is important to work out what are the most effective strategies for you.

Use of diary/daily checklists

Try devising a daily checklist, which sets out what is required for particular lessons/activities. Refer to this prior to the start of the day, before each lesson and at home at the end of the day (in preparation for the next day). This checklist could be in a diary, laminated on daily cards and paperclipped onto a diary (using a wipe board marker to tick off when things are done or objects put in school bag in preparation for the particular activity/lesson) or could be digitally recorded on your laptop.

For some people with organisation and/or time management problems a diary where the whole week can be viewed can work well as it visually helps them plan their week. These can be bought in A4 and A5 sizes. It would be best to choose the size depending on how much information needs to be written down. The day entry could be divided in half vertically (or even in thirds), with one half having the classes or appointments and the time of day, and the other side having what equipment is needed for that day. This system can also be used to write the subject for which homework has been given, the date it was given, and the date when the homework is required by. A good tip is to highlight homework due dates in a bright colour.

You may prefer to record your information digitally. For example on Microsoft Outlook there is a programme called Outlook Today which has a calendar that can be viewed daily, weekly or monthly , and has time slots; and has a Task list (To do list) which can be listed by priority, date due, and amount of task completed. Both calendar and task list can be printed off. If you choose a digital method it is recommended you use a programme that you can view the whole week and/or month, not just the day. In discussion with you and your mother it was reported that you have difficulties with time and dates, therefore this may assist you because you can visually see the week/month ahead.

Other tips when using a diary:

- a) Attach a bookmark (or elastic band) to the diary so that it is opened at the correct page each day.
 - b) Place the diary in the same compartment in the school bag.
 - c) Whatever method you decide works best (diary, laminated cards with a diary or digital diary) you must get used to checking it several times during the day. This is to remind yourself:
 - where you need to be
 - what time you need to be there,
 - how long it will take to get there (and to get used to planning for this)
 - what equipment you need for the activity.
 - d) When writing down due dates for homework it can work well to write down when it was given, as well as when it is due. Otherwise it can be too easy to forget about the assignment until it is nearly due in.
 - e) Use the diary carefully- especially if you are often late for appointments- in the diary build in time for how long it will take to:
 - travel to appointments
 - do homework/study (broken into blocks)
 - tidy room
 - interests/hobbies.
- AND block out this time in the diary.
- f) Schedule activities appropriately e.g. jobs such as study require maximum brainpower so schedule these in for when you feel at your best.

It is recommended that you try a termly or yearly wall planner at home and transfer homework due dates onto this, and other important dates from school and home activities. Being able to view the weeks and months visually may assist you in planning how much time you have left for certain tasks, and therefore assist you to plan ahead.

Effective management of time always requires planning. It is essential to make part of the day a time to plan for the day, week or month ahead, so this becomes a habit.

Study Skills

- a) Organise the home environment –e.g. try putting work in three colour coded trays: work to be done, work under-way, and completed work to be handed in. As you do nearly all your work on a laptop, you must decide if it is easier to review work in progress on the screen or on a print out. If you print out work in progress, make sure this is put in the bin when it is updated.
- b) Use “Post-it” index tabs to mark important pages
- c) Use a highlighter pen.
- d) Ensure you have a good filing system for your different subjects- use well labelled folders- you could colour code for each subject. Use file dividers within the subject.
- e) Keep desks free of clutter (especially at home)- clutter is distracting and it is difficult to find what you want when you need it.
- f) Know how to say “no” to distracting activities, and have ‘do not disturb time’ when studying- you could make a sign to stick on your door.
- g) Have time targets but do not be over ambitious
- h) Know how you study best e.g. music on or off, if difficulties with noise distractions try foam earplugs, what time of day are your energy levels at their best
- i) If a project or study is particularly daunting then break it down into small time chunks- 15 minutes at a time is better than not doing any(but still worrying about it !). Then move on to a different topic or have a short 5 minute break- grab a drink or listen to one song.

File Management

- a) Colour code the school files or books for individual subjects
- b) Always date loose pages so that they can be organised later (including handouts).
- c) Use dividers to organise work.
- d) Keep a “portable” hole punch in the file/bag so that papers can be filed immediately.
- e) Keep a “hole-punched” clear pencil case in each file (these can be purchased from most stationers) containing pencils and equipment needed for each session.

Your room

- Categorise possessions that you have in your bedroom e.g. types of clothes, hobbies such as magic equipment, study equipment, books, music, grooming products. Make a list of these.
- What storage space is available ? e.g. chest of drawers, wardrobe, cupboard, shelves.
- Decide what will be used for storing what, how readily available they need to be, then use stickers to label this.
- You could try using coloured stickers – e.g put one sticker on the storage box and one sticker (the same colour) on the magic items that go in that particular box- to remind you what goes where.
- Do you need extra storage ? e.g. clear plastic boxes to readily see your equipment or plastic drawers (e.g. from Argos, Ikea, Homebase)

- Get into the habit of putting things in their place when you have finished with them.

Good Luck !

References/Bibliography

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