

## Organisational Skills

### What can be done to improve organisation?

- **Use visual cues** (either picture or word lists) of what needs to be done or packed to support help develop memory of the tasks or the steps in the routine.
- **Establish and stick to a routine:** Routine helps memory and also allows the child to 'chunk' a group of tasks together.
- **Break large tasks into smaller ones** wherever possible, even if it seems silly (not only does this offer support skill development, but also reduces anxiety).
- **Practice makes perfect:** Additional practice is often required on an on-going basis to learn and retain a previously mastered task.
- **Established self instruction strategies** including self questioning that the child can use independently across all environments and kind of organisational tasks.
- **Visualisation:** Encourage the child to visualise the tasks or the environment to help determine what items are needed or what steps come next.
- **Think in reverse:** When it is hard to know where to start, start with the end in mind and work backwards to see if the items or steps can be recalled in reverse. For some children this gives the task more functional meaning so the organisation has more comes more easily.
- **Pack in advance:** Pack for school the night before when there are less time pressures of the morning routine.

### What activities can help improve organisation?

- **'To Do' lists:** Are a helpful way of keeping track of what needs to be done. Get your child to tick activities off as they complete them. Remember this can be done using pictures instead of words.
- **Use a diary:** Help the child to get in the habit of recording important information and dates in their school diary to be presented to a parent each night.
- **Sequence activities:** Discuss how the sequence of completing tasks in a set order helps the outcome as if the child understands why it often helps the recall.
- **Break activities into smaller steps:** Ask the child to write down the steps of an activity so that they can plan how to complete the task.
- **Assign chores that involve sorting or categorising:** Grocery shopping, emptying the dishwasher, sorting photos, cleaning out a closet, and other tasks that involve pre-planning, making lists, or arranging things are great choices. We tend to recall things by groups of category but the child needs to learn them first!
- **Cook together:** Cooking teaches measuring, following directions, sorting ingredients, and managing time - all key elements in organisation. Involve your child in meal planning too, challenging them to help you put together a shopping list.
- **Use containers and closet organisers:** Help the child to physically organise their room. If there's a place for everything (and *they* chose that place), they will find it easier to find items and keep neat and tidy it. Include 'pack up time' into the daily routine to make sure things stay organised.

## What can be done to improve the use of visuals for organisation?

- **Correct type of visual:** Visuals may include: real objects, photographs of the actual object, photographs of similar objects, drawings, computer generated symbols, (e.g. Boardmaker, Pictures for PECS symbols) and words. Some children will prefer or relate to each type differently. Trial and error will help determine which one your child will prefer.
- **Actual objects:** Generally younger children and those who have additional difficulties need visuals that most closely resemble an actual object. For example, these children are likely to respond better when you show them a puzzle rather than an electronic symbol of a puzzle.
- **Use speech:** Always use visuals with speech/words as they are designed to help your child understand spoken language, not to substitute it.
- **Consistent labelling:** It is recommended to print the name of the visual at the bottom of the card to ensure that everyone calls the object the same thing (is it a mug or a cup? a book or a reader?).
- **Accessibility:** Ensure visuals are easily accessible for the child. Keep them near where you are most likely to use them (on the fridge, in the toilet; near the front door).
- **Make them portable:** Put a few key symbols on your key ring (finish, toilet, car, home) for key words or for a sequence of what to do (e.g. sequence of how to unpack bag at school).
- **Allow processing time:** Allow the child time to process and point to the desired visual. It is a skill in itself as a parent or carer to be patient and wait! Often the children using these sorts of visuals, take longer to process information and thus to respond.
- **Persevere.** Your child may need many trials before they make the connection between the visual and the real object.
- **Reward your child** when they achieve success through the use of visuals.
- **Achievable expectations:** Start with small achievable tasks or routines and reward immediately until they have grasped the idea of what they need to do to get a reward at which point you can extend the task and time delay for a reward.

## Activities that can help improve organisation with the use of visuals include:

- **Visual schedules** enable a child to see and understand what is going to happen next. Schedules also help people to organise themselves and to plan ahead.
- **Timers** help with transitions as they tell the child how long and when they are going to have to do an activity. Timers allow us to pre-warn the child.
- **Small achievable parts:** Break tasks down into small achievable steps and use the visual schedule to guide through the process.
- **Academic templates:** Use a template for layout with space for headings, diagrams and written work. Similar to those used on slides within PowerPoint presentations. Use pre-drawn tables for adding in details during graphing or data collection.
- **Limit resources** and only have materials necessary for the task at hand. Keep the working space as clear as possible of non-relevant materials.
- **Storage:** Store work in separate containers within the desk/tote tray or have a separate space specifically set aside for the child's belongings. Organise these into specific containers so that they do not need to search through their entire belongings to find an individual item.

•**Labels:** Use pictures stuck on the outside of the containers to identify what the inside items should contain. Store pencils and the like in a clear pencil case so that items can be easily found.

For more information visit:

<https://childdevelopment.com.au/areas-of-concern/organisation/organisation-skills/>