

The Knowledge House Guide to:
HOMESCHOOL ORGANIZATION

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“Let all things be done decently and in order.” (1 Corinthians 14:40)
“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.” (1 Corinthians 14:33)

Homeschool organization is a constant challenge. Like most households, homeschoolers deal with the everyday accumulation of laundry, dishes, toys, trash, and mail. In addition, we manage a multitude of school supplies, books, papers, and ongoing projects. A well-organized homeschool allows us to save time, energy, and money so that more of those resources can be utilized for the important task of educating our children.

As Mary Pride once said, “If it’s not worth finding a special place for, throw it out. You’ll never find it anyway.” We need to have a place for everything and put everything in its place. This enables us to concentrate on teaching rather than on picking up, rearranging, and looking for things. Maintaining an orderly homeschool keeps us from spending extra money to buy duplicates of items that we lost, or forgot that we already have. Organized supplies require less time and energy spent looking for what we need. Our time is too valuable to waste it on searching for things. Besides, it’s inconvenient to interrupt lessons by having to clear off tables and desks, or find lost pencils, missing chalk, and misplaced books. Teaching and studying amidst a lot of clutter day after day is distracting, discouraging, and mentally tiring. It’s actually stress-relieving to have an organized house.

Organized supplies are more presentable than overflowing drawers or stuffed closets. File cabinets are a must for storing such items as workbooks, worksheets, school records, newsletters, magazine and newspaper articles. Bookcases and shelves are an excellent investment not only for books, but for models and displays, as well as for storing stackable containers filled with pencils and pens, crayons and markers, math manipulatives, letter and number magnets, etc. Make sure they are labeled. Clear plastic shoeboxes and empty baby wipe containers work well. Keep boxes of the same shape and size stored together so they stack neatly. Arrange books so they are easy to find, which may simply mean placing all of the science books on one shelf, history on another, and so on.

It’s a good idea to get rid of unnecessary and meaningless items to make additional space available for more useful educational materials. Throw away all the worthless stuff like ballpoint pens that don’t work, broken toys, torn outdated maps, half-finished preschool workbooks that the kids have long outgrown, piles of old magazines, dried-out Play-Doh sets, puzzles and games with missing pieces. Decorate the room with instructional or inspirational accessories such as globes, maps, historical timelines, Bible pictures, and motivational posters.

You don’t have to keep all of the drawings your children make or every report they write, but don’t throw away any masterpieces without their approval. At the end of each semester, decide together which creations are worth saving. Keep them in a special folder or scrapbook for each child. Over the years you can pare down the collection as you become more selective. Store these archival materials in the back of the closet, under the stairs, or up on a high shelf. Reserve the easily accessible locations for materials that are regularly referred to.

In general, things should be stored as close as possible to where they are most likely to be needed. Buy extra quantities of often-used essentials (such as pens, pencils, and paper) so there will be a supply handy in every room. Keep a tote bag equipped with bookmarks, notepad, pencil, scissors, stapler and highlighter pen. Use it to store all the newspapers, magazines, and books that you want to browse through. The tote bag can be carried from room to room. When you have time to sit down and go through it, take notes, clip and staple what you want, then dispose of the rest. Try to handle papers only once. Read them, file them, or discard them, so you don’t keep re-shuffling the same papers.

Place a box or basket in a central location to toss in things you find around the house, then set aside a certain time each day or once a week to return the items to their original locations. Remove clutter at its source by picking up after one activity before going on to the next. Remind children to put their toys away before getting something else out. Make cleaning fun by playing lively music, singing a clean-up song, setting a timer, or racing the clock (keep track of how long it takes and try to beat the time previously set). When picking up, put everything back where it belongs. Don’t just keep moving the clutter around from room to room. Remember that keeping the house organized as you go along is a lot easier than waiting until it’s in total chaos!