

CREATING A HOMEWORK STATION



As those bright yellow buses start rolling again, parents are understandably concerned about the kind of learning experience their children will have in the classroom – but it's just as important that you give your kids the right study environment at home if you want them to do well in school.

CHOOSING A HOMEWORK STATION

Where does your kid do his/her homework? At the kitchen table? In front of the television? Hidden away in a dark corner of the bedroom? Or perhaps your child studies in a different location every night, misplacing papers and spreading school supplies all over the house? Every child should have a quiet, undisturbed, and DEDICATED location for studying. Kids don't require much space – even a small niche is fine as long as it is away from noise and distraction, has comfortable seating, good lighting, and offers enough room to spread out. If you simply can't designate a permanent workstation, set up a rolling cart so your child can easily take his papers and supplies from place to place – every student should have a study space of some kind to call their own. Help your child create their own study station.

SETTING UP THE SUPPLIES

The school supplies a child needs depend a great deal on his grade and classes. But every homework station should be equipped with the basics. Writing implements and art supplies can be stored in a series of small plastic drawers – one for markers, one for pens, one for pencils, one for paintbrushes, etc. Loose paper works best when placed in stacking trays – computer paper in one, notebook paper in another, construction paper in a third. All those little loose supplies (like scissors, tape, rulers, protractors, staplers, etc.) can be stored in labeled shoebox-style containers. And don't forget a solid set of bookends for holding up schoolbooks, binders, and notebooks. It's also not a bad idea for your child to have duplicates of those items he uses both at home and in the classroom. Keep one set at his homework station and include another set in his school binder – stored in a poly three-ring envelope or vinyl pocket. You run less risk of something important being lost or left behind.

KEEPING TRACK OF PAPERS

Most parents' biggest complaint during the school year is paperwork – homework assignments, school calendars, memos, permission slips, graded assignments, artwork, etc. The amount of paper each kid receives can be overwhelming. The best way to stay on top of school papers is to stem the tide before it even starts. Of course current assignments should live in your child's homework folders – but what to do with the rest of it? Fill out any forms or permission slips IMMEDIATELY, and return them to your child's school folder, so they aren't misplaced and can be turned in the next day. As you receive calendars and activity notices, mark the information in your planner and discard the paperwork. What about the papers you need to keep? For organizing at home, you could try using a file folder system at your command center or desk. And finally, set up plastic tub with a lid for the new school year labeled "art/school papers." Each time your child brings home a drawing or an A+ report or other item that you want to save, put it in the box (instead of piled all over the desk or on the floor.) Then, at the end of the school year, you can pick your favorites to include in a scrapbook.

COLOR CODING IS KEY

It can be hard to keep all the materials for one class together – so the trick is to color code. Choose a different color for each class – say, math is blue, history is orange, and science is green. For math class, your child would have a blue pocket folder (the left side for new assignments, the right side for completed homework that needs to be handed in), a blue textbook cover, a blue pouch for any class-specific school supplies, and possibly a blue poly envelope or expanding wallet for larger materials. Now it's easy for kids (and parents) to double check in the morning to make sure all the right folders and school paraphernalia are packed for the day – no more excuses for showing up to class unprepared!

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